



stamp

3 vols 1/1/15/1-

afk

bol

ht 2m

S. 157¹³

LE
B554m

HERR PAULUS

HIS RISE, HIS GREATNESS, AND HIS FALL

BY

WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF 'ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1888

[All rights reserved]

472817
25.3.48



PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

PR
4104
H4
1888
V.1

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

	PAGE
PROLOGUE	1

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER

I. THE VESTAL VIRGIN	35
II. THE LEADER	55
III. THE PROPHET	67
IV. AT DINNER	84
V. THE FIRST FUNCTION	106
VI. GOOD NIGHT	139
VII. THE SMOKING ROOM	156
VIII. THE SUBMISSION OF THE LEADER	171
IX. THE CONQUEST OF THE HAREM	188

BOOK THE SECOND.

I. IN THE STUDIO	205
II. IN THE OTHER ROOM	224
III. IN ABYSSINIA AND ELSEWHERE	240
IV. SHOULD THIS HAPPEN	265
V. THE SECOND FUNCTION	276

HERR PAULUS.

Adm *Hyp Times*
PROLOGUE.

I.

Two young people were in a garden. Their names were not Adam and Eve, but Ziphion and Bethiah, which seem somehow to resemble the original names. It was a spacious garden, though not so spacious, nor so well furnished, as the Garden of Eden, which, I take it, covered many acres and had gushing fountains of clear water ; humming birds, with love birds and avadavats ; beautiful harmless flying dragons of all colours ; tame leopards, tigers, hyænas, and pumas, whose eyes flamed with love and praise instead of cruelty and hunger ; gold and silver fish, bright-coloured and vivacious sea snakes, and lubberly good-

natured sharks for the children to swim with ; together with other delightful things which to us would be the more delightful because they would be at first so very surprising. It was, however, a beautiful garden, with some age, as they say of port. If it had been an English garden it would have been very old indeed, and would have had all round it a lovely red brick wall covered with lichen—yellow, and white, and red—with wall-flowers and grasses growing tall and thick on the broad top of it. But it was in America, where, I believe, there are no gardens at all more than two hundred years old, and few which have seen so many as three generations of English-speaking men and women. It contained a flower garden, a kitchen garden, and an orchard, all in one. The orchard contained chiefly apple-trees, and the apples were now nearly ripe, for all day long they had been industriously turning their red and streaky sides to the hot sun of early September, getting every hour ruddier and streakier, as good apples should. One of the young persons was sitting on a low stool, and

the other was leaning against the trunk of an old tree. This is a detail of some importance because it shows that they were not in England, where, at sunset of a day in early autumn, young people are longing to run about, play lawn-tennis, go for walks, and do vigorous things. In America, where the heat is fierce, they are naturally less active. This is one reason why so many young people ask permission to be born in England. The house which belonged to the garden stood behind it, well-built and ugly; it was the house of Mr. Ruysdael, lawyer and prominent citizen of the town, which was a small town not many hundred miles from Boston.

The girl—Bethiah Ruysdael—had a box of colours and a sketching-block lying on the ground beside her. She had been engaged in making a study of trees. But now she sat, with hands clasped, looking up into the face of the young man. I have elsewhere—I believe more than once—preached the doctrine that the very best kind of woman is the woman's woman, which is the same thing as

the womanly woman, the woman whom other women love, of whom other women do not speak with bitterness, or with innuendo, or with eyes glancing at each other. She may be beautiful, but women do not greatly dwell upon her good looks: she may be graceful and may possess all the accomplishments, clevernesses, dexterities, and arts which cultivated ladies desire to acquire, but other women do not greatly talk of these things: they speak of those qualities which are not taught in the schools, such as her unselfishness, her kindness, her thought for others, her sympathy, and so forth. She never studies, as some maidens use, the arts and mysteries by which man may be attracted and drawn to them as by a magnet: she does not in the least understand the strength and vehemence of the passion of love in man: nor does she inquire at all into the subject. But she knows that some women are weak, and that a pretty face does not always mean a perfectly faultless soul, whatever men may foolishly believe; and when she comes, in her reading, upon

the pretty, passionate exaggerations of poets, dramatists, and novelists, who love to represent their hero's mistress as a beautiful goddess, full of all perfections, because she is so beautiful, she lays down the book and takes up another pitched in a lower and more sensible key. When she marries it is with calmness ; she gives away her heart without illusions ; she knows her own weaknesses and is not blind to those of her husband, and she thinks that life is at best soberly happy, and that there will be no moment in it which will call for the rapture of overwhelming joy. Yet she is said to make her husband happy all his life. Very often, however, this kind of woman never marries at all.

Bethiah Ruysdael was such a girl as this. Her calm, capable face : her clear grey eyes her firm mouth : the clear strong curve of her cheek—all inspired confidence. Even the business-like arrangement of her dark-brown hair helped to show that she was a perfectly sensible and trustworthy person : not flighty, whimsical, or humoursome—the

history of the last century presents some truly admirable studies of the whimsical or humour-some woman, but at present she is rare—not enthusiastic, emotional, or hysterical. As for beauty, being what she was, nobody spoke much of her good looks: yet she was comely and pleasant to look upon: somewhat paler in the cheek than a healthy English girl, slighter in frame and figure, and more delicate in feature. When a girl lays herself out to call attention by her dress and by her manners to her personal appearance, of course one talks about it: but Bethiah did not betray the least consciousness of beauty or the least desire for notice. Therefore such notice as she got was of another kind.

It is said that there is no place in the world where young men are so wonderfully beautiful as in New York. The ancient Greeks, it is reported, jealous of their own reputation, have sent down to know if it is really true. The young man leaning against the trunk of the old apple-tree possessed this remarkable beauty, in full and brimming

measure. You know the portrait of Shelley, with his girlish face and the strangely eager, passionate eyes, full of light and earnestness and fearless questioning. Well: that face has always reminded me of Ziphion's, though Ziphion was not so tall and had a larger head in proportion to his height. By what long-forgotten marriage and blending of race did this strange face break out in a small town of a New England State? Who was the ancestor or ancestress from whom the boy got that wonderful face and those wonderful eyes? His mother was certainly not an artist, or a poet, nor did she in any sense belong to the imaginative race. She was a severely Christian person and a notable housewife, whose readings as well as her imagination were, so far as one knows, as narrow as her creed. His father certainly might have been at one time a potential poet, but the General Store which he conducted blamelessly had long since killed the poetic germ, if it ever existed. He was, however, a most respectable person: he sold everything, from

an English pirated novel at ten cents to a string of onions, a barrel of apples, or a saucerful of treacle : he was a deacon in his church : and when he was not talking of dollars his mouth was full of doctrine. Dollars and doctrine : the union of this world and the next : salvation and investments : the thing is not unknown on this side of the Atlantic. Both father and mother, being perfectly satisfied with themselves, ardently desired that their only son should follow in their steps and strike out a line of trade for himself ; or, failing this, because the great and glorious gift of dollar-snatching is not granted to everyone, they prayed that he might become a lawyer and a politician, and so, presently, be elected Mayor of his own City, Governor of his own State, and perhaps—who knows?—President of the United States.

Where did the boy get that face ?

Perhaps—the middle classes preserve no genealogies—in some far-off generation this American youth had some Italian woman for a great-grandmother : or some passionate

Andalusian, or some wild gipsy—perhaps a Provençale—from whom he derived those clear and delicate features, those black eyes which were soft and lustrous and charged with all poetic qualities, such as tenderness, sympathy, wonder, insight and sensitiveness. The lad's figure was slender and tall. In the mobile lips, in the pose of the head, in the long thin fingers, one could read a temperament more nervous than that generally found even among his countrymen. Whither this nervousness will lead the American one knows not. Perhaps in the amalgam of the future, when all the nations of the world have contributed some part to the construction of the American, the nervous temperament will be modified. But how if it be intensified? Whither, however, this highly-strung organisation leads the present generation one may readily observe. For of some it makes splendid orators: of some, the most eloquent preachers: of some, fiery partisans: of some, fervid martyrs: of some, the most ingenious inventors: of some, cranks: of some, the

most crafty rogues : of some, impostors of the very highest order : on all it bestows qualities in the superlative.

You shall learn, presently, whither this sensitive and nervous organisation brought this young man. Never since the day—too short a day—of Absalom, was there so sweet a youth. Like Absalom, but in this respect only—because in thinking of Absalom one always thinks of a *beau sabreur*—the boy wore his hair long. It was parted at the side, and rolled over his white temples with a natural curve, which, in the days of the gallant D'Orsay, was achieved, where it was not natural, by the aid of science, bear's grease, and fragrant pomade. It seemed natural that he should wear long hair : if it was an affectation it was his only one, because his dress was quite plain and even rustic, while his boots would have attracted considerable attention in the fashionable quarters of New York.

‘Don't try to set me against it,’ he said.
‘Oh ! Bethiah, I never wanted so much sym-

pathy as now, and if you refuse to stand by me there will be no one. Everybody is against me.'

'I am not against you, Ziph. You ought to know that.'

'I met your father just now, and he stopped to read me a lecture about the safe ways and the unsafe ways. Well: there have been plenty of men who have tried this way and failed. I know that very well. But if I were to fail—I shan't fail, though—I should be happier than if I never had tried at all.'

'You have told your father and mother?'

'Yes—it was like having a tooth out. I'd rather have two teeth out than go through it again. But I was bound to tell them. And now it's over, and—Bethiah—don't try to argue against it.'

'I won't, Ziph. But—oh!—if you were only sure that it was the wisest and the best thing. Could you not wait a year or two—I am sure that eighteen is full early to achieve a literary success—could you not, just for a little while, do—what your father wishes?'

She added the last words with a little hesitation, from which it was clear that the paternal wishes were clearly distasteful even to herself.

‘Measure calico and weigh out tea? No—no—I cannot do it.’

‘But he offered to make you a lawyer if you like.’

‘I hate law.’

‘Then you might be a doctor—or a minister—think of being a minister, Ziph! Why you might put your poetry into your sermons and make us all cry.’

‘No—no—I must be a poet and an author. Do not try to dissuade me, Bethiah. It is my destiny.’ He looked grand—this young Apollo—as he rammed his hand into his waistcoat and stood upright, the breeze gently lifting his long locks. ‘My destiny calls me—a man must face his destiny.’

Of all Biblical heroes, Ziphion, son of Gad, is one of the least remarkable. He is only mentioned twice: there is even uncertainty in the spelling of his name: and by some he

is held to have been a family rather than an individual. Perhaps the name was conferred upon this young poet, while yet an infant, in a spirit of Christian humility. Ziphion B. Trinder! Neither Christian name nor surname quite consorts with a romantic face, poetical eyes, and yearning after literary fame. But what are we to do? We are born to our surnames as we are to our godfathers and godmothers, and are powerless, unless, like Charles Kingsley's hero, we change both names altogether, which is a kind of forgery. By dint of very great genius, perhaps the commonest of names—even Johnny Briggs or Ziphion Trinder—might be made beautiful in the eyes of the world. Yet somehow it seems as if all great poets, novelists, painters, and artists of every other kind had names sweetly and musically resonant. How beautiful to the ear are the names of Raffaello, Tasso, Tennyson, Byron, Wordsworth, Talma, Rachel, Rossetti, Meredith, Alma Tadema! Perhaps the constant handling and daily familiar use of these names have polished them up and burnished them

so that they now shine and glow and glitter in the sun and show to the best advantage : whereas, were they merely stuck up over shops, they would attract but little admiration.

‘ Well but, Ziph,’ the girl objected, ‘ think a little. You may be a doctor, or a lawyer, or a minister, and yet become an author if you like. Think of Oliver Wendell Holmes. He is a physician.’

‘ No—no—literature is sacred. She will have no divided allegiance. I belong, heart and soul, to literature.’

‘ You are ambitious, Ziph,’—the lad blushed—‘ nobody except you and me know how ambitious you are. Why not follow the regular line ? Everyone who wants to become a great man begins by being a lawyer. I suppose it is different in England. At least I never heard that Lord Salisbury or that Mr. Gladstone began in a lawyer’s office. But here—think of it, Ziph.’

‘ I cannot think of it,’ he replied.

‘ You believe that you can make your

living by your poems and stories and things.' Observe that man, mere man, could never bring himself to speak thus coldly to a friend concerning that friend's dearest ambitions. Woman, who belongs to the sensible sex, who has no illusions, and tears away the veil without remorse, and disperses the golden mist, permits herself to say such things. Bethiah knew the boy's dreams and loved to hear them: yet she knew also, or thought she knew, the trifling commercial value of those MSS. which filled his desk, and therefore she said, 'Poems and stories and things.'

'Of course,' the boy replied, 'I know very well that at first I may not be successful. Then I must wait in patience and work. I can live on very little. I shall go to one of the cheap boarding-houses where they charge five dollars a week. One poem a week—they couldn't offer less than five dollars for a poem—an essay now and then—a short tale occasionally—one of those that you like so much—a sketch of something or other, dashed off—oh! I could live very easily.'

‘Well: but could you persuade editors to take one poem a week? Don’t think, Ziph’—for he changed colour—‘don’t think,’ she repeated earnestly, ‘that I do not like your poems. I am sure they are beautiful. Many poems, not much better, are published every week in our own paper.’—Oh! Bethiah! ‘not much better!’ Ziph choked, but repressed himself. ‘And yet I fear that you may not get a poem taken every week. And if you wish to rise you must always be learning to write better and better, and so be lifted above the first anxieties for a livelihood.’

‘Well—if I find any difficulties I shall become a journalist. It’s a step down, but still it is literature.’

‘If you are going to be a journalist,’ the girl insisted, ‘why go to New York at all? Why not begin here, right away? Or there’s Salem, where your father came from, and where you’ve got cousins. Why not begin in Salem, which isn’t full of wickedness, like New York?’

‘No,’ said the boy, ‘I must go to New

York. In Salem I should be buried for ever. It is only in New York that a man can speak so as to be heard all over the American Continent and across the ocean as well. I want a world-wide fame.' Here he blushed, and stammered, and stopped for a moment, because he was ashamed even to speak of his own ambitions. 'I want a world-wide fame,' he repeated, after a gulp. 'I can be satisfied with nothing short of that. I want to speak to all the ends of the earth. Nobody knows except you. Everybody would laugh at me if they knew.'

'I shall never laugh at you, Ziph.' This girl was younger than himself, yet the lad confided in her, asked her advice, and was to some extent guided by her. You have heard what manner of girl she was, so that you will not ask how this could be.

'Well, then—you know already what I think. How *can* people go on living in such a place as this? It is small and mean and ugly, and the people are ignorant and conceited and stupid. In books we read—that is, you

and I read—none of the others do—about art and society and all the splendid things that go on, but here we see none of them—we don't belong to the real world, the civilised world that has taken so many years to build.'

'We read of it, Ziph. Does not that content you? To be sure we cannot go and live in London, if that is what you want. But we are quite as well off as other American citizens. We make our own culture, and everybody says it is much deeper and more real than the aristocratic varnish of Europe.'

'And we read about great men, but we never see any of them. Here they are all little men. Yesterday I was in the cemetery looking at the tombs. How many hundreds lie there! Yet not one—no—not one—who was ever known outside his native place or will be remembered when his children are dead. How *can* they go on contented to be so obscure?'

The lad had often talked in this way before. But his talk had more meaning in it

now that he was going to cast himself upon the world.

Bethiah, who was neither an agnostic nor an atheist, hastened to administer, or at least to exhibit, the consolations of religion.

‘Ye—yes,’ the boy replied doubtfully, as if he would like to have, in addition to the Harp and Crown, the remembrance and the contemplation of world-wide fame. Indeed, one cannot but feel as if the great soul of Shakespeare himself must derive continually fresh gratification from the reports daily dropping in of his continued fame. A glorified person whose mortal remains lie in the Tower Hamlets Cemetery, or that of East Finchley, cannot have this satisfaction.

‘But yet—oh! To feel that one has lived to some purpose, and has made a mark upon his generation, and is talked about wherever the English language is spoken, and will not be forgotten when the breath is out of his body, why,’——he stopped and gasped.

‘Always fame and distinction, Ziph,’ said the girl. ‘That is all you think about.

· Would it not be better to feel that your work has been good work well done, whether you have won fame or whether you have remained obscure? Then you would die with the assurance——’

‘You talk as if everybody was always going to church,’ the boy interrupted impatiently. ‘Why, to do good work and yet miss fame—one would rather——’ he stopped, because on this girl’s ears the sentiment in his mind would have sounded like rank blasphemy. ‘Besides,’ he went on, ‘do they get such an assurance—these obscure villagers? Why should they get more of it than the men who fight with all the world looking on?’

‘If you talk of fighting,’ said the girl, ‘remember how many gladiators die unseen and unremembered.’

‘Well, they die nobly, because they die fighting. These people die ignobly, as they have lived.’

Then there was silence awhile. The sun was sinking low and the evening air was quiet, save for the bells of the cows as they were

driven slowly home along the road, each one stopping at her own gate.

‘Ziph,’ said Bethiah whispering, ‘how much money have you?’

‘Mother will give me a hundred dollars. Father will give me nothing. When I have spent my hundred dollars, he says it will be time enough for him to send me money to carry me home again.’

‘I’ve got a hundred dollars saved, Ziph. You shall have that money too.’

‘Oh! no—no.’

‘Yes—you shall—do not say a single word. Why, Ziph, we have been school-fellows and like brother and sister always, haven’t we?’

‘Always,’ he replied.

‘Two hundred dollars is not a great deal to give you a fair start, but perhaps it will do.’

‘It *shall* do,’ said the boy. ‘I am sure to succeed. I feel that I must succeed. And when I come back here I shall be’—his voice choked—‘famous. I shall be famous.’

‘Famous,’ repeated the girl, this time careful not to wound his spirit by any prophecy in the Cassandra vein. ‘And then you will be happy I hope.’ She had no desire for fame, and no confidence at all in fame as a medicine for the procuring of happiness.

‘Do you remember the Medium who came here last winter?’ Ziph asked suddenly.

‘Yes—why? He was only a common cheat and impostor. What about him?’

‘I don’t know. He did strange things, anyhow.’

‘He drank whisky. There was no doubt about that.’

I think that those Americans to whom the first outward and visible sign of wickedness is the drinking of whisky number about twenty millions. Fortunately for the trade, the population is fifty millions.

‘Perhaps he did. But suppose—I only say suppose—that by the help of spirits we could not only get a new revelation of the other world, but that we could go to them for advice and guidance, by which we could

make ourselves successful. Think how it would be if we could light upon such an adviser as a wise spirit who would tell one what to do.'

'Well, Ziph, that is a poet's dream. Go and write a poem showing how a man was led upwards by a spirit, as Dante was led by Beatrice.'

'Dante—yes. He was led to Heaven and Hell and Purgatory. But I mean—if a man wanted distinction, would it not be a delightful thing to find such a spirit who would show him a way.'

He looked about the garden as if there might possibly be one or two spirits thus benevolently disposed, wise and capable, within hearing. But there followed no sign of their presence.

'Always greatness, Ziph? Why, think of the millions who die unknown! How should you hope to escape the common lot? One or two out of every generation are remembered for their works. And yet you are dying to be one of them.'

‘Never mind the improbability. If there were only six men and women in all the world going to be saved, you would try to be one of the six. You know you would. Well now, ever since I saw the Medium and the wonderful things he did, I have been trying to find out if I, too, were a Medium.’

‘Ziph!’

‘Because, if I were, I could lift the Veil, as he did, or pretended to do, for myself.’

‘Ziph!’

‘And then I could find that spirit and make him do whatever I pleased.’

‘Oh Ziph—I am sure it is wicked. Do not—do not go on. Remember that witches were not suffered in the land.’

‘I have gone to my own room to try. You sit alone and you do nothing. You look straight before you, and you keep your mind quite clear. Presently there comes a time when the room in which you are fades quite away and is lost. Then everything vanishes. You lose the sense of yourself—you are outside the body—your soul is floating——’

‘Ziph—stop, I entreat you.’

For as he spoke his voice dropped and his eyes assumed the far-off gaze of one who looks through things and sees them not.

‘Am I truly behind the Veil?’ he murmured, swaying gently to and fro, with hands outstretched as in the dark. ‘I hear a rustling of wings and a whispering of voices. There is soft music around me: gentle hands touch me: strange lips press my lips: there is fragrance in the air: my feet are on the threshold——’

‘Ziph!’ The girl sprang to her feet and caught him by the coat collar with both hands and began to shake him vigorously. ‘Stop play-acting!’

He turned his eyes reproachfully.

‘Play-acting!’ he murmured. ‘She calls it play-acting!’

‘You were looking exactly as the Medium tried to look. He could not, because he had pig’s eyes and fat cheeks. But you, Ziph, you, to descend to the level of that poor creature whose tricks have been exposed

again and again. Oh ! Ziph—it is worse than nonsense—no spirit will ever help you, save to your own destruction.'

'Was I acting?' he repeated, dreamily. 'Sometimes one doesn't know whether one is acting or whether it is reality. How do you know that you have not dragged me back from the very threshold of the next world—from knowledge and from power?'

'Stuff and rubbish!' said the girl.

II.

Six months later, a young man, shabbily dressed, whose boots were down at heel and broken in the toes, walked slowly up the Broadway of New York. His face, sharp and pinched, showed the deepest dejection. There are so many sad faces in every great city that the New Yorkers may be pardoned for taking small notice of this one sad face.

The lad—he was no more—presently arrived at a certain door on which was a brass plate announcing that here was the

office of the 'Spread Eagle Magazine.' He stopped, hesitated, and finally, with a deep sigh, mounted the steps, and entered the office.

'I have called,' he said, 'about a manuscript I sent to the Editor a short time ago.'

'Title and name?' asked the clerk, briskly.

'It was called "The Veiled Monk of Cordova."'

'Name?'

'It was signed Paul.'

"Veiled Monk of Cordova," by Paul,' repeated the clerk, mechanically, writing on a slip of paper. 'Wait half a minute.' The young man obeyed with a certain meekness.

'Not been at this business long?' said the clerk.

'What business?'

'Sending your MSS. around.'

'No, not long.'

'Ah! made it pay yet?'

'Not yet.'

'Thought so'—with a look at the seedy

clothes and the worn boots—‘Got anything else to do?’

‘No, nothing else.’

‘Take my advice, and give it up. Give it up. Bless you, we’ve thousands of manuscripts. They come from all parts of the States; from Canada—even from England—with letters and without. If with letters they declare that the writer is starving; and if without, there is a note on the first page requesting the Editor to attend to this work without the least delay, and to forward the dollars by return post. Get something else to do—give it up, I say.’

The young man trembled, but made no reply.

‘Here’s your manuscript. See. The Editor has just looked at two pages—here’s his pencil mark—and into the basket it went. No chance for you. Give it up, I say—it’s no use—and try something else.’

The young man took his manuscript and meekly retired without a word. This was his last hope: he had ventured to hope once

more and for the last time that he might be accepted—and now to be told that it was no use and that he must give it up.

The young man was none other than Ziphion Trinder. He had enjoyed six months' experience of the literary life—he called it the literary life—and he had not succeeded in selling a single one of his poems, essays, stories, or sketches—not one—not a single one.

He arrived brimful of enthusiasm and of hope; he had a portmanteau stuffed to bursting with the beautiful productions which were to take New York Editors by storm, and strike the whole of the United States, not to speak of Great Britain and her Colonies, with delight and amazement. He began by considering which of the Magazines he should first address: whether Harper, or Scribner, or the Century, or the Atlantic: or whether he should try the English Journals—Longman's, Temple Bar, the Cornhill, the Gentleman's, or Tillotson for the Newspapers. Finally he resolved to be patriotic, and to

send the first-fruits of his genius to the magazines of his own country. Afterwards he would cross the ocean and make pale with envy the faces of the English writers.

Why tell the tale? Everybody will understand that the clever boy's crude productions found no favour. He pelted all the Editors with his papers. He had not had a single kind word from one of them, and now it was all over. He had tried all; he had been rejected by all; and he had no money left. The situation was truly terrible. At the end of the week he would have to leave his boarding-house; it was the middle of the winter and he would have no place to lay his head.

And only six months before he had come to the city, his head aflame, his cheek aglow, resolved to make his fortune and his name at a single bound! Here was a fulfilling of destiny! Here was a glorious outcome of ambition! Many youths of eighteen have the same dream, but few there are who believe in it so profoundly as to reduce it to actual

experiment. Poor Ziphion! what is to become of him?

He was so miserable that he dared not think, but strolled along in a purposeless way and listened to the talk of the passers by.

First there came two girls dressed in furs, with thick veils, muffs, and gloves, and protected from the cold by the solid fortification of a good luncheon. They prattled of *chiffons*: and they quickly passed him. Then followed two middle-aged men who talked of dollars: and they passed him. Then two elderly ladies who were talking of their minister: and they passed him. Then two young men who talked of dollars: and they passed him. Then other two young men who talked of dollars. Then more women and more men, and they all talked of dress and dollars: and they passed him.

Then there came along a couple of men who were speaking of something else.

‘I tell you, Doctor,’ said one of them, ‘that you ought to take a pupil.’

‘ I have often thought of it. The difficulty is to find a pupil.’

‘ You are not old, but you may die, and then your incomparable powers and your knowledge will die with you—therefore, take a pupil.’

‘ My dear friend, where am I to find one? I want a thousand qualities combined in one mind, all of which are rare, taken separately. For instance, I want youth, quick intelligence, sympathy, a highly nervous and sensitive organisation, a poetic disposition, wide reading, and good education. I want a young man who is perfectly free from the trammels of relations, society, and ties of any kind. I want, besides, one who will give absolute obedience and preserve, if I require it, inviolable secrecy. Besides this, he should be a youth unspotted, not like these young Gothamites, up to all kinds of devilry; and he must be prepared to postpone indefinitely the acquisition of dollars. Tell me, my friend, where shall I find such a paragon, such a Phœnix for a pupil?’

They passed him and went on.

Suddenly the words fell upon Ziphion, who had been listening languidly, with a new meaning. For what purpose could this gentleman want such a pupil? He quickened his steps and followed the speakers. Presently one of the two broke off and left the other, the man called Doctor, who wanted to find the pupil.

Ziphion followed this man. He turned out of the Broadway into one of the side streets which cross it at right angles. Presently he stopped at the door of a house. Then—an inspiration—it was but a chance—Ziphion hurried up and addressed him.

‘Sir, I beg your pardon. May I have one word with you?’

‘What is it?’

‘You want a pupil. Take me.’

The man called Doctor looked at him curiously for a few moments.

‘Come in,’ he said.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

THE VESTAL VIRGIN.

AT twenty minutes past seven there came into the drawing-room, as yet empty, a girl dressed for the evening. To the general world she was Miss Brudenel, only daughter of Mr. Cyrus Brudenel. But she was known among the more frivolous of her companions, male and female, as the Vestal, or as Sibyl the Vestal, or even as Dodo, for reasons which you will immediately understand if you are patient and place a little confidence in your narrator. She answered readily to all these names, if only for the first and most important reason that her full baptismal name was Sibyl Dodona. She would also, I make no doubt,

have been baptized Manto Amalthœa Daphne Pythonissa—and then she would have had a truly beautiful name—but for the fact that her father's classical learning was rusty. It will be acknowledged, however, that her name, even without this compliment, had an oracular, mysterious, Pagan, and Vestal virgin-like ring. Such a name should properly belong to a girl of large and lustrous eyes and pale cheek and lofty brow, charged with the mysterious power of an ancient priestess, filled with the sacred fire of prophecy. But Nature loves to turn the Blanchés into Brunettes, and make the Violets look like full-blown Roses, and the Pets and Pansies like Queens; she corrupts the sons of mathematicians so that they become poets, and the sons of poets so that they become engineers. The world, in fact, is full of people destined by their parents for the highest and most dignified offices, who have ended in occupying positions of a very different kind. I was myself destined for the Archiepiscopate—I can never gaze upon an Archbishop without a mild wonder

how I should look in an apron—and now you see. As for Sibyl, Dame Nature had made of her—though she was solemnly dedicated to the Cause from her very cradle—a damsel less like a young Vestal—I suppose Vestals were sometimes youthful—than any young woman I have ever seen. I may be wrong. And certainly, in the day when Vestals went about reprieving criminals, adorning processions, making the sacrificial ox vain-glorious with wreaths of roses, and occupying the front seats while the gladiators slaughtered each other, I seem to have been somewhere else, very likely in the ancient British city of Grimspound. Still, speaking with diffidence, one thinks of Vestals as of nuns; and again of nuns, not as the light and frivolous creatures depicted by Gresset and the author of the ‘*Contes Drolatiques*,’ but as beings pale, emaciated, austere, given to mortifying the flesh till there was none left to mortify—in itself a mortifying conclusion: regardless of personal appearance; pleased to have their beautiful hair cut off; delighted to dress up in.

a hideous garb; joyfully fasting; enduring hardness of all kinds; never so happy as when they had to turn out of a warm bed—but then it was never allowed to be quite warm, so that they might enjoy the misery of cold—and to hurry along a draughty corridor into an ice-cold chapel, there to shiver and to chant a sniffing service. That, I say, is the popular conception of a Vestal virgin.

The outward appearance which this young lady presented, pointed to anything rather than the life of self-inflicted torture, humiliation, or discomfort. A pair of laughing eyes, rosy lips always ready to laugh, light curly hair and plenty of it, a cheek warmed with sunshine, the whole face full of possible Venus, as the Delphian prophetess of old was full of Apollo, a shapely figure and a generous stature may be outward and visible tokens of a holy vocation, but they are not generally so read and accepted. In the same way she wore her dress of heliotrope silk, trimmed, mounted, and set off with white feathers, as if she felt a solid and substantial pleasure in

merely putting on a really beautiful dress, and as if she had no craving at all for the claustral black and white. In her hand she carried a feather fan, quite a mundane pretty thing; and on her wrist was that worldly gaud, a golden bracelet set with turquoises. And yet her name was Sibyl Dodona.

The lamps and candles—Lady Augusta had quite an eighteenth century love for wax candles—were lit and in their places, the fire was made up, but the people had not yet arrived. Sibyl glanced first at the clock—she was in good time, twenty minutes before the guests would arrive. Then she looked in a mirror, just to see if that would confirm the general impression of her own looking-glass and the opinion of her maid. Any girl would do that, whether she was a Vestal or not—we can picture the handing round of the polished steel mirror among the real Vestals before the ladies formed themselves into procession, and marched out into the open, grave and solemn and beautiful, the ugly ones, of course, stage-managed into the middle, out of sight. Satis-

fied with the opinion of the mirror, Sibyl smiled, perhaps at the thought that she had twenty minutes' start of the other people, who were asked to dinner at a quarter to eight and would not appear until that moment. It is just possible that she smiled because she was so early—as one chuckles virtuously at getting up by six, two hours before anybody else ; but perhaps there was another reason, for the door was opened and a young man came in—unnounced, because he was staying in the house—and Sibyl blushed and laughed, and blushed again when this young man, after entering with the greatest propriety, and looking about, and satisfying himself that there was nobody else in the room, ran across it with the utmost eagerness and caught both Sibyl's hands, and kissed her on both cheeks and on the lips, with the most daring indifference to time and place, and whispered, 'My dearest Dodo!' The most privileged lover could do no more.

One might have had a worse kind of lover. Many girls are obliged to put up with a very inferior brand of lover. This young man was

strong to begin with. A man ought to be strong. The length and the proportions of his limbs, and the depth of his chest revealed the athlete. I do not know his record at all, nor the length or height of his jump, or anything about his performances, because these are things of which I am profoundly ignorant. The athlete came in after my time. But everyone says that Tom was a good athlete, and one is glad to accept the unanimous opinion. He was, however, more than an athlete. A first class in the Natural Science Tripos and a laboratory record already honourable, had prepared him for the post he now held as one of the Demonstrators in the School of Mines. Those who hold such a post look forward to become Professors in their turn, regarding even Professor Huxley himself as no more than their predecessor, considering themselves as his followers in the advance of science and in fame; they intend to be made Fellows of the Royal Society; in due course Doctors of Oxford and Cambridge, members of the Athenæum Club, *causâ honoris*; and, to

complete their scientific career, Rectors of Glasgow, St. Andrews, and Aberdeen. The Crown alone has no honours, titles, or distinctions for these men. But they need not Crown distinctions: greater honour hath no man than the respect of his country. Pity that they must ever die. The weak point of the scientific young men is that they have a tendency to premature gravity. One loves to see a youth of five-and-twenty bubbling and boiling over with mirth, and rejoicing in the spring of his manhood. Therefore, it is pleasant to record that Tom Langston—which was this young man's name—was not yet spoiled by his profession, but laughed, and was frivolous, and joked, and was happy, just like one of those foolish prodigal young men in the old pictures, who were represented as laughing idiotically, while they ran along a broad road at the end of which was a great door, which, it could be plainly seen, led to flames and was guarded by two horrific devils with tails and hoofs and pitchforks. Yet it was a strong face, pleasingly ugly and charmingly rugged,

though perhaps masterful. Those who knew Tom Langston would have said that Sibyl had made no mistake at all when she entrusted to him the happiness of her life.

‘We only have a few minutes,’ she said. ‘It was very good of you, Tom, to dress so early. No, sir, not too close, for fear. Stand quite quietly on that side of the fireplace, and I will stand on this. So—more than an arm’s length between us, please. What if papa were to come out and find—oh, Tom!’

‘I almost wish he would,’ said Tom. ‘Then we could have it out at once. When will you let me speak to him, Sibyl?’

‘Not yet—oh, it is not the least use to speak yet. There could not possibly be a more inopportune moment. Why, they have got the most wonderful person in the world coming this very night. He is going to revolutionize everything. The Mediums—poor old things!—are to be quite snuffed out at last with their accordions and their tubes and rubbish. All the old spirits are to be sent to the right about, and we are going to have an

entirely new importation. Mr. Emanuel Chick and Lavinia Medlock are invited here to-night for a last appearance, poor dears ! Lady Augusta anticipates the immediate conversion of the whole world ; and my education is to be neglected no longer, so that I may take up my duties as a Vestal as soon as the new man is ready for me. Of course he will only prove another humbug ; but he must have his innings, I suppose. And oh, Tom, if you love me do not speak yet.'

'You will be of age, Sibyl, in a few weeks, and then not even your father——'

'Tom, do not talk like that. I must be married like other girls, with my father's consent and blessing.' Her voice trembled a little, and her eyes dimmed for a moment. 'You do not know how much he loves me, and what great things he expects of me. It will break his heart when he finds out that I cannot do what he expects and hopes.'

'Great things, indeed ! With the Raps !'

'I suppose it is no use suggesting such a thing, Tom, but if you really desired to win

his consent you might pretend to be a Medium, and to talk with the spirits, and so work round to the subject gradually.'

'It is such a sorry business, Sibyl. I could not possibly pretend to have the least hand in it.'

Sibyl sighed profoundly.

'No, Tom,' she said, 'of course you would not practise any such deception. But it seems so sad, I feel like the Agnostic daughter of a pious and earnest Bishop. Like her, I do not dare to reveal my unbelief.'

'Yet you do not believe in it?'

'No, I have lost every shred of belief, and I am afraid to tell them so. All my life long I have been looking on at manifestations and messages, and they have always been the same; and, oh! dear me! in spite of the messages, it seems to me as if we were not the least bit advanced.'

'You are not,' said Tom, 'so that either the spirits know no more than we already know, or there are no spirits.'

'And I have at last got,' continued the girl

with a little laugh, 'to know exactly where the things come in and how they lead up to them—the raps and the music and the rest of it, you know—the things which may be tricks.'

'I should think they were tricks!' Tom replied, contemptuously. 'Why, Dodo, you are just like a girl who goes to see a melodrama every night in her life, and so gets to know all the surprises and where they come in, and expects the startles and the jumps. To think that a reasonable man should give up his whole life to the encouragement of these miserable impostors, when there is the whole world of science before him!' This is said with all the scorn of a full-blown Professor, not a mere Demonstrator.

'Try to be more patient with my father,' said Sibyl, 'for my sake, Tom. He is not a common curious pryer into secrets: he wants to search and find out, if he can, what is possible to be discovered of the other world——'

'And I,' said her lover, 'find my hands full of the world that is around us. Give me science to work for and love to live for; and

when life is over I shall await without fear the life—if there is any—which lies beyond.’

Every age has its formulæ. Perhaps this is one belonging to our age.

But it was twenty minutes to eight and the people began to come.

The first comers were two girls, who also came in unannounced, because one of them was staying in the house and the other was her companion. Cicely Langston, Tom’s first cousin, and, like him, the ward of Mr. Cyrus Brudenel, was blind from infancy, but she walked everywhere about the house without being led, though her companion was always with her.

‘You here, Tom?’ she said, walking straight to the spot where he stood by the fireplace. ‘You are dressed early to-night. That is very unusual.’

‘No, Cis. Perhaps it is my anxiety to witness the fireworks we are to have to-night, which made me hurry up.’

Cicely smiled and sat down, her eyes closed, her hands crossed in her lap, in the

patient and pathetic attitude of the blind. She said nothing in reply, because her cousin's scoffing attitude as regards the Researches carried on in that house was well known to everybody. She was somewhat like him, though with that kind of likeness which vanishes when you look into details. For where his features were rugged, hers were regular; and while his face was ruddy, hers was pale; and while his expression was combative, hers was full of patience and resignation. Her features were delicate and fine; her nature, one perceived at once, was incapable of the stronger passions, but was wholly governed by the affections.

She was dressed in what seemed to be black lace and nothing else, with a bunch of freshly-cut flowers at the neck. The observant person, while admiring the dress itself, which was not only costly but artistic, would have objected that it was 'put on' rather than worn. This effect is produced, with the best dress ever made, when a shop girl dresses a dummy, or when an artist dresses a

lay figure—no lay figure could ever yet be made to show a pride in her ‘things’—or when a lady’s maid dresses a young lady who is profoundly indifferent as to what she has on. There really are a few young ladies of whom this may be said, only they are all blind from birth. Cicely Langston was one of them. She resigned herself to be dressed for the evening as for a drive, but gave no thought to her raiment, except, perhaps, that she liked it soft and warm.

The girl who entered the room with her was her companion, Hetty Medlock. Companions, one observes, governesses and private secretaries, are all apt to fall into one of two faults. Either they go about with a sulky and discontented air which they vainly try to dissemble, or they assume, and habitually wear like a grinning mask, an impossibly cheerful look, as if they loved a condition of dependence, and would choose it out of all the lots and fortunes offered to mankind. Hetty was still too young for the cloud of discontent to have permanently settled upon her brow ;

but to-night she was clearly discontented with something, very likely with her grenadine dress, which, like a man with a grey beard, could no longer pretend to be young. This is a quite sufficient reason for any girl to be discontented. Perhaps she looked discontented because she did not like her work. Since, however, work of some kind was necessary, Hetty Medlock might have shown something of that thankful heart which one expects even in a pauper who gets a job—and, besides, many girls would have jumped at such a job as being companion to a girl who was the most unselfish creature and had the sweetest temper in the world. On the other hand, it must be confessed that to be a companion at all is to be, in a way, a household servant, and such girls as Hetty especially dislike household servitude.

Hetty was the daughter of the once famous Lavinia Medlock, a Medium of the first water in the day, now five-and-twenty years ago, when people still loved to turn tables, listen to raps and receive messages of the old-

fashioned kind, and when such a simple message as one from a lost child to the effect that she was happy, brought inexpressible joy to a bereaved heart. No person ever was such a benefactor in this respect as Lavinia Medlock. But though she was still ready to turn on a telephonic communication with any spirit you might call for, the world no longer came to her house to enquire. Wicked people had got her into trouble by asking for messages from persons alleged to be deceased who had never existed—and yet the messages came. Distinguished spirits, such as those of Lord Byron, Shakespeare, and even Dr. Johnson, had taken a pleasure in bringing her into ridicule by rapping nonsense, insomuch that her practice had almost entirely fallen off, and she was now fain to let lodgings. Her husband had long since run away, chivied out of his own house, as he himself said, while drawing on his gloves, by bell-ringing, raps, sighs, whispers, cold breaths, and such supernatural small ware. He bore it as long as he could, but he was not a brave

man, and his nerves gave way. Therefore he went away, with a small handbag, into the Night, or the Shadows, or the Darkness, and was no more heard of. He was by profession a clerk, and when impecunious clerks go out into the Night or the Shadows, they generally get their feet upon those steps which go swiftly down to Sheol. In any case Mr. Medlock had been no more heard of.

If Hetty had looked happier she would have been a very beautiful girl, much more strikingly beautiful than Sibyl. She possessed a pair of large and lustrous eyes, dark enough to be called black, an unusual thing in an English girl, and a great mass of thick black hair. It was the face of a girl in whom passion was possible—passion on a grand scale, Spanish or Italian passion, with burning jealousy and revenge. Fortunately, such girls in these days of self-restraint and repression and the shame of showing any sign of strong feeling are rare.

‘Well,’ said Tom, ‘I hope the grand Function will come off successfully, and then there

will be no room for doubt left at all, will there, Cis?’

‘There is already no room left for doubt, in the minds of a great many people,’ Cis replied with the calm conviction of a believer.

‘Oh, I only said what I believed to be the correct thing to say after every new manifestation of the spirits.’

‘To me,’ said Cicely, ‘life is all shadow. Whether it is a spirit of this or of the other world that speaks to me, matters little, so that it is a good spirit. Sometimes we have had communications with those who are not good spirits.’

‘That’s just it,’ said her cousin, ‘and the only way to keep out the deceiving spirits is to draw the line so as to include only the spirits of this world. From the nonsense they talk I should be inclined to believe that we never get hold of the good spirits of the other world at all. What do you think, Miss Medlock?’

‘Why do you ask me, Mr. Langston?’ she replied. ‘Has not my mother been a

Medium for thirty years? Am I to acknowledge that all her friends are of the baser sort?’

Then Lady Augusta came in, followed by Mr. Cyrus Brudenel, and the other guests invited to dine, and to assist at whatever might follow afterwards, began to arrive.

CHAPTER II

THE LEADER.

MR. CYRUS BRUDENEL has been for many years, as everybody knows, the recognised leader in the spiritualistic world of London. Other people may have come to the front for a moment by virtue of peculiar powers and excellency of gifts. They have played their parts, received their applause, made their bows, and then retired. But Mr. Cyrus Brudenel remains. In every cause, movement, or party there is its Mr. Brudenel, whose name is inseparably mixed up with it. He must be rich and married; he must live in a great house, and his wife must be always receiving. Further, he must be a sincere believer in the cause. In short, what Lord Shaftesbury, to take a well-known case, was

to the Evangelical party in the Church, so Mr. Cyrus Brudenel was to the Spiritualists.

Mr. Brudenel was the second son of the late Mr. Abraham Brudenel, shipowner and millionaire. His elder brother, created a baronet in 1872, in gratitude for large moneys spent in the advance of the Liberal cause, has been recently, for similar reasons, promoted to the peerage, and now enjoys the rank and title of Lord Bow and Bromley. Cyrus, for his part, passed through school and university with no incidents to speak of, and took an ordinary degree after a career marked on the one hand by no turbulence, effervescence, or hot madness of youth, and, on the other hand, by no apparent superiority of intellect or academic distinctions. In fact there was nothing at all to indicate his future greatness. On the demise of Abraham, the firm was converted into the well-known Company, Limited, and the sons, who sold out their interest, bought land with the money they received. This, a few short years ago, was the recognised first step with those who wished at once

to make an investment absolutely safe and to rise higher on the social ladder. What is to take the place of land, supposing that men continue to get rich, which is doubtful, and still aspire to enter society, which is not doubtful, has not yet been determined.

I know not by what means the mind of Cyrus Brudenel was first turned in the direction of Spiritualism. Perhaps by simple curiosity: perhaps by the natural longing of mankind to enquire after the Unknown and strive to see the Invisible. For thirty years and more he had experienced convictions of the truth, and been one of those disciples whom nothing can shake from their allegiance. Yet, which is a symptom common to all Spiritualists and peculiar to them—he was not restful and settled and contented, but remained always eager after new manifestations, ravenous for further confirmations, and still unsatisfied with the messages which come in plenty to those who enquire. He has assisted in his time at numberless séances; he has been rewarded by the most stupendous

miracles of undoubted and undeniable genuineness; in his presence the heaviest and most solemn tables have become frisky and frivolous; the bulkiest of Mediums have lost their ponderosity and been wafted about like feathers. Yet he has never been satisfied; for in miracles, as at dinner, appetite comes to those who eat, and one is never full.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Mr. Brudenel has been too frequently the prey to lying spirits, and has been often imposed upon by brazen impostors pretending to supernatural powers. At one time, for instance, when he entrusted the whole conduct of his affairs to the advice of the spirits, who told him what to do by means of his then favourite Medium—it was Mr. Emanuel Chick—he was made to buy a good many shares in ventures which somehow all turned out badly. There were suspicions that the Medium had been squared, but Mr. Brudenel preferred to lay the blame upon the spirits. The commercial element among those with whom we are permitted to converse is one,

he says sadly, whose City record, did we know it, would probably prove shady.

His triumphs ; his disappointments ; his real and sincere convictions of the truth and final success of his cause ; the yielding and treacherous nature of the ground on which he stood ; his insatiable thirst for a fuller and a deeper revelation, with manifestations of a more startling kind, and beyond the possibility of doubt ; the adulation of the Mediums who lived upon his word ; the consciousness of Leadership—all these things together had stamped his face with an expression as full of varied emotions as the cauldron at Camacho's wedding was full of every delectable dainty. Among them might have been observed—as the reporter says—pride, dignity, importance, hope, enthusiasm, doubt, fear, suspicion, irritability, jealousy, and many other passions. He was certainly dignified in his carriage ; he was certainly hesitating in his speech ; his words were brave but his manner was nervous. As for his figure, he was tall and portly ; he had grown bald and

grey but had as yet no look of old age or decay. His face, handsome still at sixty, must have been far more strikingly handsome at thirty. This is not surprising when we reflect that his aristocratic features and his noble presence were inherited from a long line of ancestors who were all, to a man, porters, labourers, draymen, rustics, mechanics, and craftsmen from time immemorable until Abraham, afterwards the millionaire, left the ranks of labour to become a clerk. The enemies of Cyrus Brudenel call him names, such as Pump, Old Pump, Solemn Old Pump, and the like, which I will not repeat. To be sure his best friends could not pretend that he was lively and sparkling; but then he was a Leader in a Cause on which ridicule, epigram, irony and contempt have been freely hurled, not only by wit and by philosopher, but also by the baser sort, because there is none so vile but he can jeer at spirits and ghosts. To such a Leader, all laughter is like the crackling of thorns beneath a pot; and if you should be so ill-

advised as to laugh in Mr. Brudenel's presence he would become that pot and presently boil over.

As for Lady Augusta, his second wife :—

There is a certain type of wife, which will, I fear, with the march of woman's education and the cultivation of her critical faculty, grow rapidly rarer until it finally becomes extinct. I mean the wife who ardently adopts her husband's creed, convictions, dogmas, hobbies, and Party as her own, and enters into the very inner spirit of that creed or Party. Thus, there is no person in the world who more profoundly believes the doctrine of the High Church than the wife—if she be of this type—of the Ritualistic clergyman ; there is no person more profoundly agitated about the future state of her own soul than the wife of the Calvinist ; there is no one who more honestly believes in the Connection than the wife of the Minister. If the husband be a man of science, the wife will breathe the atmosphere of science, and live wholly in the scientific world ; if he be an artist, she will

live among the studios and talk of Art ; if he be a musician, she will talk and think of music all her life ; if he be a shopkeeper—but here we draw the line, because there is, it must be admitted, a universal tendency to sink the shop.

Lady Augusta belonged to this type. She felt no doubts—she had no hesitations. ‘I have seen too much,’ she said, ‘to admit of any room for doubt. After all, my dears,’ she added, ‘one is possessed of eyes and of the reasoning faculty. Oh ! we are on the verge of a new revelation. I look for it daily ; I expect the Prophet ; he may come at any day or any moment, and then—oh ! then—there will begin for the world in my drawing-room a new Age of Faith which will restore happiness for ever to suffering humanity.’

The days passed and the looked-for Prophet came not.

Lady Augusta, a handsome woman still, and a *grande dame de par le monde*, was now thirty-five. She could therefore no longer welcome that Prophet in her youth. Now if

anything wonderful is to happen to a woman in her lifetime, she would naturally prefer it to happen in the time of her youth and beauty. It would be delightful to become the friend—in pure Platonic bonds—of a Prophet; to make his earthly existence smooth and happy for him; to be young with him and to grow old with him. But he came not: and Lady Augusta's youth took to itself wings and flew away.

Perhaps, however, the Prophet would be a venerable sage. Meantime, five-and-thirty is not old for a Queen of any cause. Lady Augusta was the undoubted Queen of the Spiritualists, and she maintained her Court with a graciousness and a hospitality truly admirable.

To be taken up by Lady Augusta was to secure public attention; every Medium made straight for her drawing-room; her name was perfectly well known in New York, St. Petersburg, Paris, and in every spiritualistic centre. No doubt the occult plutosophers, Mahatmas, and Adepts of Thibet regard her with favour,

though they have never yet visited her. She had her circle of courtiers as well as her continual stream of ever new and richly gifted Mediums who wanted a *clientèle* and an income: round her were gathered all those thinkers who are perpetually engaged in trying to look behind the Veil.

Behind the Veil. We, who live in this great crowded anthill and struggle and toil daily with our fellow ants, bearing our burdens and living in the present, rejoicing in the sunshine of the moment, satisfied with life, contented if we do not suffer pain, careless for the most part of what may happen when this life is done—we humble, common folk, I say, hardly know anything of the world which thinks of nothing but to pry behind the Veil. To us it is a great black bank of cloud, lying all round us, whichever way we look. It is as the black spaces between the stars: we cannot look long upon it without a reeling of the brain. Sometimes, to those who think of it, it seems to roll towards us, sometimes to roll back a little way: whenever we make

a great physical discovery there is a feeling that now, at last, we may have rolled it away altogether and for ever. But it does not roll away, and, my brothers, I think that it will never either lift or roll away, whatever we may discover, and that we know already everything that mankind will ever be permitted to know of the other world. Even if we find the secret of birth and growth and decay : even if we prolong our own lives indefinitely, the secret of the other world will never, I am sure, be found out by any efforts of human ingenuity.

But, for these people, life has no other interest. For them there is nothing else. Science, art, literature, philosophy are foolish and futile. Politics are unworthy the attention of a serious person. Religion, if they have any, which is not always the case, is incomplete without the supplementary revelation for which they are always looking. Reason is insufficient unless it is aided by the counsel and guidance of the spirits whom they consult every day. Even if they saw, with the earthly eye, the New Jerusalem itself descend-

ing from the clouds, they would go and ask the spirits by the well-known machinery if it was a real city and a thing to be relied upon.

In every age there have been always such men. They used to consult the wise women, and to ask the future in the thousand and one ways which have been enumerated for us by the Sage of Meudon. They inquired of the oracle: they cast nativities: they sought for the Philosopher's Stone and for the Elixir of Life: they looked in the Crystal and practised palmistry: they turned tables: they listened to raps: they pretended to mysterious powers: they talked of the Rosy Cross, the Kabbala, and Hermes: they recorded the lives of necromancers and the miracles which they wrought: they looked for hidden secrets wrapped in allegory: they whispered and mumbled and made themselves into societies and sects: and in these latter days they read the secret thoughts of mankind, they put on astral bodies, they defy space and time, they boast of Charma, and they belong to the Sacred College of the Occult Philosophers.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROPHET.

BUT it was now past eight, and everybody had arrived except the guest of the evening, who always comes last. The people were sitting or standing about, with conventional smiles and hungry hearts, exchanging words which meant nothing, and boiling with indignation to think that a mere Medium should presume to keep them from dinner. For, although a man may boast the most undoubted supernatural powers, there exists in Spiritualistic circles a widely-spread feeling that a Medium ought to know his place, and that it is to the last degree unbecoming for him to keep ladies and gentlemen waiting.

On such an occasion the guests belonged to the highest circle of Spiritualists—they

were attended, no doubt, by their friendly Spirits, but these were invisible. Among them, for instance, was the famous Athelstan Kilburn, barrister-at-law. Forty years ago, Mr. Athelstan Kilburn became an original member of the first Society for Psychical Research which was founded at Cambridge, having precisely the same objects as Mr. Henry Sidgwick's later association, and was, therefore, probably established in imitation of it. His friends have long since gone off to practical questions, and some have gone up the ladder and become Bishops, Judges, Q.C.'s, Archdeacons, Deans, Physicians, Quarterly Reviewers, Editors, Professors, Head Masters, Leader Writers, and even Novelists. But Athelstan Kilburn went on Researching, and for the sake of the Spirits has sacrificed his ambition and his career.

There was again the equally well-known Rev. Amelius Horton, senior fellow of King Henry's College, Cambridge, who heals the sick by touch, and cures the halt and lame, and makes the rheumatic go upright. At least, he says he does. He also claims to have

foretold the earthquake which happened in Egypt on the occasion of the transit of Venus ten years ago or so. He says it happened in accordance with his prediction, and that he distinctly felt the shock, though the papers agreed to pass it over. Lastly, he keeps up direct communication with a great quantity of spirits, some of whom make drawings for him consisting of curves of quite wonderful design and of previously unheard of colour. As might be expected, these pretensions and powers make him an immense favourite with his brother Dons, who are greatly puffed up with pride in him and talk about him as much as ever they possibly can.

The professional Medium was represented by Mr. Emanuel Chick. He is now advanced in years, and has dropped out of fashion, like his former rival, Lavinia Medlock. But in the old days he appeared at the Tuileries before the Emperor, and at St. Petersburg before the Czar; he has been made the subject of papers and leaders in the 'Saturday,' the 'Spectator' and the Dailies; he has also submitted his

‘claims’ to the investigation of Professors Huxley and Tyndall. He has therefore a glorious past to remember, even if the present be a time of tightness. In appearance Mr. Chick resembled a waiter in a third-rate City dining-room. One looked for the napkin.

While they waited and talked, the voice of Lady Augusta was raised a little louder than usual, as if she wished all to hear.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘Herr Paulus is actually in the house. He arrived an hour ago.’

‘Oh! and you have seen him?’ The speaker was Mrs. Tracy Hanley, whose Sunday evenings are well known.

‘Not yet. He went straight to his room. But I can tell you something about him, if we have time. I have here a letter from our friend, Anna Petrovna, the well-known adept of St. Petersburg, you know. She says’— Lady Augusta opened the letter and read:—

“Our brother Paulus, who is on his way to England, is one of those rare and precious human creatures who acquire early in life powers which the more dull can only attain

to after years of work and struggle. He proposes, if he meets with a sympathetic circle——”

‘He will—he will,’ sighed Mrs. Tracy Hanley.

“To preach the Higher Philosophy in a way which will be entirely new to you. I declare that until conversing with Herr Paulus and seeing with my own eyes the exercise of a power which I had before only heard and read of, I had no true conception of his philosophy. My dear sister in those ties which are more sacred than the ties of blood, begin by dismissing from your mind all preconceived ideas of Spiritualism, as well as all prejudice and suspicion. He makes a new departure. His soul is candour itself; he is as pure as the white leaf of a lily; he is as incapable of deception as one of the lofty spirits with whom he holds habitual communion; he trusts and expects to be trusted. In a word, my dear Augusta, take him to your heart.”

Perhaps it was a pang of hunger which made Mr. Emanuel Chick snort at this point.

“It is only by sympathy, by confidence, and by affection that he can be won, step by step, to unfold his soul. He is entirely beyond and above any considerations of money; his wants, which are simple, are supplied by his Friends; take care not to offer him any money.”

It was no doubt hunger again which caused Mr. Emanuel Chick to breathe loud at this point.

“I do not know that there is anything more to say by way of introduction. My dear sister, we are on the eve of the most stupendous revolution of thought that the world has ever seen. It will begin in England—Christian, bigoted, prejudiced, conservative England.”

‘Oh!’ Mrs. Tracy Hanley clasped her hands to her bosom. ‘How delightful! How wonderful! And his name—Paulus—Paulus—German for Paul. Why do they always have such strange names?’

‘I believe the people who possess the largest portion of these gifts have generally—I know not why—been sons of the

soil.' Here Lady Augusta dropped her voice because Mr. Emanuel Chick undoubtedly looked like a gentleman who had made himself, after an imperfect training in the Art of Sculpture. 'They have got an astounding collection of names—down there. This man, however, seems in some essentials quite different from others whom we have received here.'

'From his name he must be a German,' said Mrs. Tracy Hanley. 'He is probably middle-aged. He will be too careless to think of his dress; he will trample a good deal on our little social *convenances*—that matters nothing; he will have spectacles and blue eyes and a big beard, and he will talk about nothing but the spirits.'

'That we must expect of such a man and in this house. As for me,' said Lady Augusta, looking round the room and through the bodies of her friends—'I live among them—they whisper to me continually, and I hear their wings at every moment.'

Her friend shuddered. But it was a strange house.

‘ Well then, dear Lady Augusta, I am only afraid that he will smell of tobacco and say “Zo.” But oh! what matters the smell of tobacco if a man has such gifts? ’

Lady Augusta smiled with superiority of knowledge.

‘ Herr Paulus may be the exact opposite of all that you imagine. I think from another passage in Anna’s letter that he will be a great success, not only in the way pointed out by Anna Petrovna,’ here she lowered her voice again, ‘ but also a social success. How much more I dare not think. We want a new departure. Everything has grown stale. All the answers to all the questions have failed. All the old systems are breaking down. We are on the eve of a universal collapse of systems and of Faiths, and nothing really new has been proposed. In fact, my dear, we want—we must have—a new Gospel. I pray that this stranger may preach it to the world—in my drawing-room.’

At this moment Herr Paulus himself appeared. I believe that everybody had ex-

pected just such a person as that described by Mrs. Tracy Hanley. That is the only way in which we can account for the fact that everybody with one consent gasped. Because the man who stood before them was not in the least like the middle-aged, spectacled German imagined by that lady. There was nothing Teutonic about him at all but his name—nor was he middle-aged nor did he wear spectacles—nor did he carry a big pipe in his hand. Instead of all this they saw before them a young gentleman, apparently much too young to have achieved anything worthy of remark. As a rule it is only senior wranglers who ever get the chance of being famous before five-and-twenty, except a poet or two, a lucky officer or two, and a Prime Minister or two. This young man—could he really be Herr Paulus?—was certainly not more than four-and-twenty. He was not bearded, bald, or grizzled, but smooth-faced, save for a light moustache; he was not attired in the stage dress, so to speak, of the German philosopher, but in that of a private gentleman who knows

the power and value of personal appearance, and is attentive to every detail, so that he was not only well dressed, but simply dressed, with no more jewellery than a gold chain across his waistcoat, and a single pearl stud in his shirt, and no other ornament than a small white flower.

Could this man be the great luminary of occult science spoken of in such glowing terms by the theosophic sister of St. Petersburg? In height he was reasonably tall, or tall as a young man need desire to be—namely, about five feet ten; his figure was slight and not in the least athletic, but active and full of spring—more like the figure of a Frenchman than an Englishman; his features were curiously delicate and regular. ‘Dodo,’ Tom murmured, ‘I believe he’s a young New Yorker. I’ve seen them made that way.’ His black eyes, though somewhat deep-set, were keen and swift and full of light; his forehead was white and high; his cheek was pale; never, certainly, since spiritualism, clairvoyance, telepathy, and occult philosophy first began,

was there seen such a Medium ; always the Medium was uncouth and unused to the ways of polite society, and always he was ill-dressed as well as ill-mannered ; generally he was middle-aged. Surely, if this man was a Medium he was the pearl of his profession ! Again, his hair, so dark as to seem almost black, was worn rather longer than is the fashion with most young men ; he wore it parted on the left, and it rose over his forehead in a natural arch that is unusual and most effective.

‘I’m sure he’s a New Yorker, Dodo,’ Tom whispered again. ‘He’s one of the sort they call dudes.’

In one detail only he differed from the ordinary young man of society. It was that he wore kid gloves. To be sure he had only just come from St. Petersburg, where the white kid glove is *de rigueur*, and perhaps, though this I do not know, it is always customary in New York.

It was, in fact, none other than the Doctor Mirabilis, Herr Paulus himself. He stood at

the door for a moment, and surveyed the assembly with a rapid glance; then, without the least embarrassment, and with a manner perfectly easy and assured, and yet entirely devoid of side and swagger, he quietly stepped across the room to his hostess. Perhaps he knew her by the single step she made to meet him. Anyhow, there was no hesitation.

‘Lady Augusta’—he bowed low, putting his heels together. Therefore he was not an Englishman, because no Englishman knows how to make a bow. But he raised his head and took her hand. ‘I have seen you already,’ he murmured, ‘while I was in St. Petersburg. I came here in the spirit. And I am assured already that our souls will be in sympathy.’

His voice was extremely soft and musical, his eyes met Lady Augusta’s with a steady glow of affection and friendship which moved her strangely. And he held her hand in the warm long grasp of one who greets a long absent friend.

Could he—Oh!—could he be the long looked for Prophet?

Then he turned to Mr. Brudenel, whom also he seemed to know.

‘Mr. Cyrus Brudenel,’ he said, ‘I have brought many messages for you and some gifts from my Friends, who have long recognised your true worth.’

Mr. Brudenel generally gave his Mediums two fingers to shake, after the manner of the late Lord Shaftesbury with the inferior clergy, but in this case he surrendered his whole hand. Herr Paulus took it with less warmth than he had taken Lady Augusta’s, and he looked curiously into Mr. Brudenel’s face as if trying to read something there.

‘Very glad, Herr Paulus,’ said his host, trying to put on the air of patronage with which he generally received his Mediums, ‘Very glad to make your acquaintance.’

‘I was with you—in the spirit. Yesterday morning it was, Mr. Brudenel, in your library. You were reading.’

‘I was,’ said Mr. Brudenel.

Everybody knew that Herr Paulus had only that day arrived from St. Petersburg. But nobody expressed the least surprise. In this house anything might happen.

‘You were reading a novel by Ouida, called “Moths.”’

Mr. Brudenel changed colour, and some of the people smiled.

‘Ah! yes—in fact—yes—I was looking into one of her books.’

‘You turned the page down at 144,’ Herr Paulus continued, ‘and you resumed your reading this morning until you arrived at page 280.’

‘Yes—yes,’ said Mr. Brudenel, much confused at being found out in reading Ouida. ‘Ah! in this house, Herr Paulus, we are never surprised even at being reminded of trivial actions in the—ah!—privacy of a study. We are never surprised, and we expect a great deal—ah!—a great deal.’

He meant, I suppose, to indicate first, that they were all quite used to people going about without their bodies and being able to

see things; secondly, that his study ought to be considered private and confidential; and thirdly, that after this nasty one, he intended to be critical and exacting.

‘Ouida’s novels,’ said Herr Paulus severely, ‘are not the best preparation for spiritual study. Your attitude of mind prevented my communicating with you, Mr. Brudenel.’

Everybody lowered their eyes at this rebuke and no one ventured to look at their Chief. Had anyone, ever before, seen or heard the like. To Mr. Cyrus Brudenel! From a Medium!

Then Herr Paulus turned again to Lady Augusta.

‘I must apologise for being late,’ he said, in softer tones. ‘After I was shown to my room a message was brought to me—rather an important message—from my Friends.’

‘A message, Herr Paulus?’ You see he had only been in the house for three-quarters of an hour and had come straight from St. Petersburg. ‘A telegram?’

‘No,’ he smiled; ‘not a telegram. My

Friends do not use the wire. The message came from the heart of Abyssinia. I had to attend to it at once, though I kept you waiting.'

He spoke without the least appearance of boastfulness, though a man who receives messages from Abyssinia more swiftly than would be possible for mortals, even if the Palace of the Negus and St. Martin's were united by a wire, might reasonably stick out his chin. But no. He spoke as if such a thing were common.

'Dodo,' whispered Tom once more, 'this Johnnie is going to be far better fun than poor old Chick. Here's a splendid Cracker to begin with.'

Then dinner was announced, and the sigh of relief from Mr. Emanuel Chick was heard through the whole room. And Herr Paulus, instead of meekly waiting to be put in his place and to follow last without any lady, as had always happened to Mr. Emanuel Chick and the other Mediums, calmly offered his arm to Lady Augusta.

‘It is my first evening in England,’ he said, ‘and my first dinner with you. May I exercise the privilege of my rank, Lady Augusta? Here we are all Spiritualists—in name at least’—did he mean anything by looking at Mr. Chick?—‘and in Spiritual Rank I am the first and the chief.’

Then they all marched out to dinner in pairs, male and female went they.

CHAPTER IV.

AT DINNER.

EVERY well-ordered and old-established house has certain usages, traditions, manners, and customs of its own. It is only the New Rich who are exactly like each other, and have machine-made manners. Why not, if they are copies of good manners? The leading tradition of this house was the silence which always reigned in it. There was never any trampling heard in it, nor any banging of gongs, ringing of bells, knocking at doors, striking of clocks, or chatter of servants. The only bells were the electric contrivances which are not heard beyond the room for which they are intended. The servants went about their work without so much as a whisper. It was said that even snoring was forbidden, and

Lady Augusta certainly once dismissed a butler, otherwise virtuous, for trumpeting with his nose. The phenomenal silence of the house was supposed to be rendered necessary by the presence of the spirits.

The silence of the service was most marked at dinner. Only those who have lived in countries where the servants go barefoot know the value and beauty of perfectly silent service. Lady Augusta could not, unfortunately, make her people go barefoot, but she made them wear noiseless shoes, constrained them in their serving not to whisper instructions to each other, not to chink glasses, rattle plates, or knock bottles together. In the last century, when the Regent of France and his friends held those suppers of theirs which were assuredly the most delightful and the most wicked of all suppers, they were fain to turn out all the people and to wait upon themselves, because they had not yet been able to train their servants—whom they were always admonishing with whacks, kicks, cuffs, and canings—

to silence and order. Even in the present day the loud and noisy zeal of the waiters at a restaurant, their jostling of each other, and their clatter and rattle of plates and knives, inflict anguish upon every sensitive soul; while in many private houses King Scrimmage reigns absolute. Another tradition imposed upon the house by the peculiar conditions under which its occupants lived was that the conversation at dinner should be always pitched in a highly intellectual key. This made the meal a function greatly beloved by the younger members of the family.

Once, to be sure—alas! the conspiracy failed—goaded to desperation by the dulness of the talk, Tom and Sibyl resolved on the introduction of something comic. Had the thing come off I am convinced, in spite of their apprehensions, that it would have produced no greater effect upon the company than a word or two of Hebrew or Zulu. They resolved that the something comic should take the form of a pun, as being a weapon easier to handle and more suitable for a dinner

table than a comic song or a practical joke. Then they set to work to make a good pun. This seems easy, but to the unpractised hand there is nothing more difficult. It is, in fact, as hard for a beginner as a Ballade or a Villanelle. One does not like to say how long this pair worked at their miserable pun, but when, after superhuman efforts, it was completed, they arranged to lead up the conversation artfully to the point where Tom was to be entrusted with the production of the calembourg. Sibyl felt that a pun is somehow unfitted for the lips of a maiden—when one comes to think of it, no woman was ever yet known to make a pun, though a few here and there—only a few—have been known to tell a good story.

Very well. At the last moment, when the conversation had been led up to the point, and Sibyl was looking round the table expecting the bewilderment which would immediately fall upon this profoundly solemn circle, Tom broke down. He said afterwards that he felt a qualm of pity for his uncle, who was

more solemn than all the rest of mankind put together. But I doubt this explanation. I believe he was afraid. He says, further, that he felt himself unable to inflict so heavy a blow upon the finest part of man, his dignity. But I doubt this statement. I am sure he was afraid. As for the loss of the pun, that is nothing; no pun is ever really lost, because it is always being made over and over again. I have no doubt that Messrs. Hook, Hood, Lamb, Burnand, and Byron, have made Tom's unlucky pun on many occasions, and that in many a screaming burlesque it has caused the faces to broaden from pit to gallery hundreds of times. But the loss of the proposed experiment seems a pity.

Mr. Cyrus Brudenel himself was certainly by no means the kind of person with whom one would like to take a personal liberty. I have often wondered what would happen if a man should venture to slap a really great and correspondingly solemn man upon the back. Suppose, for instance, that a curate—one of the inferior clergy—had ventured to slap the

late Lord Shaftesbury on the back. What would that venerable nobleman have said or done? To cuff and kick the presumptuous curate would be undignified; to swear at him would be impossible; to splutter and get red would only make him laugh; to find a fitting rebuke in short but eloquent words, which would leave an indelible scar on his soul, would be difficult. Merely to look at him might do no good. Yet something, one feels certain, would have been said or done, so that the miserable curate would have crept, pale and trembling, with fearful remorse, and foreboding of dreadful punishment to come, into some dark and secret recess of the earth—say the cavern at Buxton.

Conversation was long in beginning at this dinner, partly because everybody wanted to hear what the newly arrived young great man was going to talk about, partly because everybody was hungry and cross at having been kept waiting, and partly because some of the guests regarded each other with the jealousy and suspicion not uncommon among specialists,

actors, conjurors, and those who are rivals for the public applause.

‘Our sister—Anna Petrovna,’ said Herr Paulus presently, ‘has already written to you from St. Petersburg announcing me.’

‘Yes. Did she tell you that she was going to do so?’

‘I knew that I should have no need of a letter of introduction. I had hoped that you and Anna were both able to converse without the vulgar necessity for letters. In that respect the Russians are far in advance of the Westerns. Nothing is more common among our Friends in Russia than conversation at any distance. That, however, will doubtless come in due course.’

‘I hope that it may,’ said Lady Augusta. ‘We hear from time to time of this wonderful power of annihilating space, but we have not yet been able to witness any manifestations of the kind. And you, Herr Paulus—?’

‘Space and time do not exist for my Friends. Do not speak of me, Lady Augusta ;

‘speak rather of my Friends, who will be yours.’

‘Oh, if they would become my Friends! We are weary, Herr Paulus, of the dull round of our English and American Spiritualism. We have been greatly harassed by frivolous, lying, and wicked spirits. We ask for a more real and a deeper communion with spirits whom we can trust, those who will not deceive us, those who will give us messages able to lift up our hearts and to carry us out of ourselves.’

‘You shall before long commune with my Friends,’ he replied softly.

Lady Augusta sighed deeply. ‘Our sister, Anna Petrovna, told me so many wonderful things about you, Herr Paulus, that we have been thinking of nothing else since we had her letter.’

‘I know the contents of that letter. They were communicated to me in the train between St. Petersburg and Berlin.’

‘Communicated? Oh! I understand.’

‘By my Friends. They also communicated

to me many things which are necessary to me here. For instance, they told me much concerning yourself.'

'Concerning me?' She blushed and looked startled. It is disquieting for a strange man to tell a lady that he knows all about her.

'Do not imagine that I know everything. I know only what I have been told. Thus, I was told the history of Mr. Brudenel, of this house, of your step-daughter, and so forth—more things than I can tell you in an hour or two—yet if you were to examine me, you would find that in some points I am still quite ignorant.'

'It seems strange that your Friends should wish you to know such trifling matters as the private concerns of this household.'

'How do we know what are trifles and what are things of importance? For instance, I am here your guest, for how long I do not know. I am here with a definite mission. Surely it is well that I should begin, not as a complete stranger, but with some knowledge

of your difficulties and the nature and disposition of those among whom I am to work? It saves time, and the trouble of explanation.'

'Yes. But should not the confidence be extended, Herr Paulus?'

'You mean, should you not know as much concerning me? Certainly. But as yet my Friends are not in communication with you. And, pardon me, Lady Augusta, I think there are no spirits with whom you do confer who are strong enough to do you so simple a service as to tell you who and what I am.'

'It is, unfortunately, too true. There is not a single spirit who has ever done anything for me of a practical kind.'

'You have here, I perceive, one Medium at least.' Herr Paulus looked down the table.

'We have several. There is Mr. Emanuel Chick. Have you heard of him?'

'No. Yes—I have this moment heard of him.' Herr Paulus shuddered as if in pain. 'Lady Augusta,' he whispered, 'mistrust that man's communications. His spirits are lying spirits.'

‘There is the Rev. Amelius Horton.’

Herr Paulus looked curiously and doubtfully at the clergyman. Then he smiled.

‘He is the sport and plaything of the spirits. Oh! I understand, now, how it is that I could not communicate with you when I was here yesterday. This house is haunted with inferior spirits. It is full of them. I shall send them all away immediately.’

‘And will nobler spirits take their place?’

‘You shall see. But you have a much better Medium present—a young lady.’

‘Who is that?’

‘I told you that I was ignorant of many things. I mean the young lady next the blind girl—Miss Langston, who, too, might, in good hands——’

‘Oh! It is Hetty Medlock, Cicely Langston’s companion. You think that——’

‘I do not think only. I am sure that she is gifted with the temperament of the Medium.’

‘Look at my step-daughter. How rejoiced

would be her father if you could discern in her the signs of power.'

Herr Paulus shook his head. 'No,' he said, firmly, 'I discern no such signs in her. Meantime, to return to myself, you shall, in due course, learn anything you want to know about me. I must have no secrets from you, Lady Augusta, if our relations are to be—what I hope and trust they will become.' Again he lowered his voice and their eyes met, his limpid and filled with that expression which she had observed before.

'I expected, I confess, a very different person. But, yes'—she answered his eyes—'we will be friends and you shall do for me what you can.'

It was almost with the smile of a happy lover that he received these gracious words. Neither spoke for a while.

'Herr Paulus,' she said, presently, 'I confess that, thinking you were so very different, I have asked a good many people to meet you this evening, and'—here she blushed—'I fear I have held out hopes. But do not

mind them. Forgive me, and do not show them anything.'

He laughed.

'You want the signs and the miracles. Very well; it is natural. But, Lady Augusta, you at least will very soon pass beyond the region where signs and wonders are necessary. My mission is not to do these things, but to teach. Yet I dare to think that I shall be able to satisfy your friends' expectations even in this direction.'

'Oh, will you really?'

The young man's manner, assured and easy, yet not presuming, impressed her with a sense of sincerity. She believed in him from that moment, implicitly and without the least doubt.

'The Ancient Wisdom does not consist in making people open their eyes and stare. But it confers Powers on those who deserve them which they may use for their advancement in true knowledge. You would like to see some illustration of those Powers?'

'Yes, yes; we who live and move on the

Lower Plane always ask for some sign. Is it not natural?’

‘It is the old story,’ he said somewhat sadly. ‘Lady Augusta, your friends shall have their sign—from my Friends.’

Then there was silence for a space with the commonplace business of eating, and Lady Augusta made the useful discovery that even the highest flights of philosophy and the Ancient Wisdom do not deprive a young man of his appetite. On the other hand, they seemed to take from him the power or the desire to drink wine. Herr Paulus drank a bottle of Apollinaris.

‘Do not think me curious,’ said Lady Augusta presently, ‘but may I ask, is it often that the secrets of your philosophy are entrusted to men so young as you—so very young—while they are withheld from men as old and as eager to acquire them as my husband?’

‘What is my age, Lady Augusta?’

‘I suppose about three-and-twenty.’

‘I do not pretend to be the Wandering

Jew. But I will tell you a strange thing. It happened the other day, only a few months ago. Perhaps you will not believe it.'

'I will believe it if you tell me that it is true.'

He raised his voice a little. Then there was silence at the table and all listened.

'It was in Abyssinia. Some natives were digging for the treasure which is everywhere believed to be hidden underground. They found, instead of treasure, a great stone vault, into which they broke an opening, for it had neither door nor window. Around it the earth lay apparently undisturbed for ages, and above it grew a tree hundreds of years old. They found within the vault not indeed the treasure they looked for, but an old man. He was thin and worn—say rather wasted; his beard was white and his head was bald. How had he lived in that stone vault? How long had he been there? I repeat there was neither door nor window, no means of getting fresh air, no visible means of communicating with the world, no way of pass-

ing food into the vault. And the roots of the tree, hundreds of years old, were lying over and around the vault. We, who know more than the world generally knows, immediately recognised in that old man a famous philosopher once celebrated by his disciples, long, long since lost sight of, and forgotten many, many generations ago—and all these years, with animation suspended, he had been meditating in the highest rapture—that state which few indeed can possibly attain.’

‘Well? Finish the story,’ said Lady Augusta.

‘They brought him out into the open air, and as he breathed again he opened his eyes and looked around him. Then a wonderful change came over him. For his wrinkled skin filled out, and his flesh came back to his bones, and his eyes became bright, and his hair became black. He was once more a young man, strong and comely.’

‘Oh!’ they all murmured together. But Mr. Emanuel Chick drank off a whole glass of

champagne, and pretended not to listen. And Tom grinned.

‘Then he looked about him and saw the city close by, and the shepherds with their flocks. And suddenly he vanished and was no more seen.’

‘That young man—it was you yourself, Herr Paulus.’

‘No, Lady Augusta,’ he replied, sadly. ‘I wish it had been. For that young man has now attained the highest felicity possible for man. I tell you the story that you may understand that among my Friends there is no such thing as age or youth or death unless it be willed and chosen. In other words, if my Friends please they may look young; and if they please they may look old.’

This was a strange kind of talk to hear in a London house at a London dinner. But then this was no ordinary house.

‘Oh!’ Lady Augusta heaved a profound sigh—about the twentieth at that dinner. ‘I had always longed but never ventured to expect that one of the wise men of whom

we have read would actually come to my house.'

'There are Englishmen among us,' Herr Paulus added. 'Not many, but a few, who break away from the shallow creeds of the present, and seek to conquer for themselves the powers and the secrets of the past. But they refuse to leave the place where they reside, even to preach among their own countrymen. Therefore I am sent.'

'No better ambassador could be sent,' said Lady Augusta graciously.

On the other side of Herr Paulus sat Lady Augusta's old friend, Mrs. Tracy Hanley. She had been privileged to read some of Sister Anna Petrovna's letters. She was thinking all the time that if the young man talked in this beautiful and bewildering way, what an effect he would produce at her Sunday evenings, especially if he would 'do' things. This was a selfish view to take of the Highest Philosophy and the Ancient Wisdom, but ladies who have Sunday Evenings are often inclined to that form of selfishness.

She looked at him and listened. The longer she looked the more she was impressed—wholly from the Sunday evening point of view—with the strange beauty of his face and his lovely dark eyes. The more she listened the more she fell in love—always from the Sunday evening point of view—with his soft and musical voice. If he would only ‘do’ things. At this house, where manifestations of all kinds were common, whatever he might do would be received in a coldly critical spirit, like the jugglery of a conjuror among his professional brethren. But at hers, where nothing better than the common Medium of commerce had ever been introduced, he would be received with delightful surprise. A young man, mysterious in name and of unknown origin ; a young man who might be of fabulous age ; a young man romantic in appearance, possessed of good manners and endowed with miraculous powers ; a veritable prophet of old, but in evening dress, not a sheepskin ; a youth sent from the Lord knows where by the Lord knows who, to preach a new and

mysterious doctrine—but it all depended on what he could ‘do.’ Why, such a man as this, if he could really do things, would make her Sunday evenings celebrated. He would cause them to become the talk of the town. It would be a privilege to have the entrée at those Sunday evenings. The world would rush to her rooms. This pleasing vision floated through her brain while the young man talked. Why should it not be realised?

She began to recall all the successive prophets and lions who had passed through her house in the last ten years. There was the Baboo, for instance, clever and fluent, who had come over to England all the way from Bengal on purpose to teach us Theistic doctrines which we knew before. He could talk, certainly; but when he had been talking for an hour or so the men stole away and the women yawned. For his discourse was charged with the deadly flavour of the commonplace, while his conceit was profound and his new gospel was certainly a poor thing compared with the old one. But even the

Baboo was better than him of the sorrowful visage, that Agnostic, who felt so profoundly the presence of the Abysmal Unknown, and yet was compelled by his enormous Intellect to acknowledge only the Phenomenal. Both Baboo and Agnostic were played out. Then there was the languorous Æsthete, now also played out, though in his day he could satisfy the deepest yearnings of the soul with art, blue china, peacocks' feathers and a dado. As for the Anarchist, the Nihilist, and the Socialist, they were only uncomfortable creatures who terrified people. No one would come twice to talk with a wild and spectacled Anarchist, who desired to destroy everything first, whatever was to be done next. No one who wished to keep the good things which the gods had given him would care to meet a Socialist more than once. Should he prevail, there would be no more drawing-rooms, and no more evenings anywhere, except upon the cold kerb, and no more social gatherings except outside the street door. Again, there was the Medium who might be hired at half-

a-guinea, and who brought mysterious rolls and an accordion, and had the lights out, and played tricks too thin to delude the most credulous. Time was when he was seen at many houses—but he, too, was a thing of the past. What were such clumsy things as rappings, levitations, writing on the ceiling and the rest, compared with such things as were told and hinted at by this beautiful and wonderful young man?

Here Lady Augusta looked round and rose.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST FUNCTION.

‘No miracles yet, Dodo,’ Tom whispered when, a quarter of an hour later, the gentlemen came into the drawing-room.

‘This is not a common Medium remember, Tom,’ said Sibyl. ‘I suppose he must not be asked to sit down and show off, like Mr. Chick.’

‘We must have something, though,’ Tom replied, ‘if it’s only to back up that awful Cracker of his about the Old Man of Abyssinia.’

The general impression in the room, which was now crowded with a large company invited to meet Herr Paulus, was that something very startling indeed was expected. The people looked at each other, and at the

guest of the evening, with eyes that plainly spoke of general expectation. What did they expect? Most of them were old hands in Research, who looked for nothing but some modification of the usual business to which they were thoroughly well accustomed. There might be music in a darkened room—but there was no accordion ; there might be messages and raps ; but there were none of the tubes, rolls of paper, and other accessories of the common séance. There might be spirit photographs, an incarnated spirit or two, or perhaps some message a little out of the common. More than this was not expected by the experienced. Of course there was a sprinkling of young people, beginners in the mystic science, to whom every creak of furniture is a message from the dead, and every note on an accordion out of tune is the music of the heavenly spheres. And there were some, like Cicely Langston, who fervently believed in, and ardently prayed for, the coming of a new Prophet with a new Revelation. But the greater number consisted of the old hands.

Among the latter was the well-known Lavinia Medlock, parent of Hetty, once the most fashionable of all the Mediums, but now, like others, fallen into neglect and obscurity. She looked on with an anxious and wistful air, as if longing for a wrinkle which might start her afresh. Just so, if the comparison be allowed, the Professor of legerdemain, when he is out of an engagement, frequents the exhibitions of those who are on the platform, in hopes of picking up something new. But Lavinia's day was passed. The Rev. Benjamin Rudge, too, Historiographer in ordinary to the Cause, awaited the events of the evening with more than common interest. It was long since there had been a sensation in Spiritualism, and he scented materials for 'copy.' He was hungry for new things, because there are lines of literature, one need hardly explain, which are more lucrative than that of Chronicler to the Spiritualists.

'Again, Herr Paulus,' Lady Augusta whispered, 'will you forgive me? I have asked all these people to meet you, as if you were a

common Medium, such as come over to us every year from America, and want to get money from us.'

'Your friends shall go away satisfied,' he said, smiling.

In fact, a blank dulness was already falling upon the party, because it seemed as if the expected programme was not to be carried out. No arrangements had been made for a séance. Now, if one is asked to a party to meet a ventriloquist, ventriloquism is expected: if to meet a conjuror, we look for tricks: if to meet a pianist, we expect to hear him play: if to meet a most eminent professor of Spiritualism, we expect to have quite a conversation with the other world, and to get some new lights, at least, on the way that things are managed there.

'Will you have the room arranged?' Lady Augusta asked him. 'My people are very quick in moving and arranging furniture.'

'Not at all,' Herr Paulus replied. 'I want no special arrangements.'

'The room can be darkened in a minute

by removing the lamps. Shall I have a screen before the fire? And shall the people sit down?’

‘No darkness, if you please. Oh! Lady Augusta!’—his eyes spoke pity, not reproach. ‘Darkness? And with the spirits of Light? My Friends, I assure you, have no need of darkness.’

Lavinia Medlock heard and hung her head. All her manifestations had been produced in a darkened room. She had never known a single spirit who would work for her in the light.

Mr. Chick heard and sniffed, incredulous.

Everybody sat down who could find chairs, leaving a space in the middle of the room. Tom Langston remarked with some interest that Mr. Emanuel Chick took up a position beside the pianoforte. This gave him a back view of the performer, and suggested a watchful, even a suspicious, attitude. Mr. Rudge and Lavinia Medlock were not slow to observe the movement, and nodded to each other, meaning that the evening might possibly end with a row, such a row as happens when a

treacherous person strikes a match and the Medium is discovered capering about the room as the incarnated spirit and playing the music of heaven upon an accordion.

Herr Paulus stepped quietly forward. He looked slowly round the room, and then, raising himself to his full height, he lifted his right hand suddenly and unexpectedly. Everybody jumped. No Manifestation, however, followed this action.

Then he spoke.

‘I have come to this country,’ he said, ‘with a Message. Do not think, pray, that I am here as a professional interpreter and a Medium by which spirits can convey messages to you. My Friends, and those who are the Accepted, have intercourse so free and unrestrained with the Souls of the Living and the Dead, and with the Spirits of the other world, that the poor and feeble utterances which have reached your ears are worthless to them. Look, if you please, into the record of the communications, and ask yourselves how far the world has been advanced by them.

My mission is to teach—to those who are worthy—the old wisdom, the Ancient Way. You see in me a servant, a Messenger, one who simply carries out his orders. But as it is well to prove in some way that I am what I profess to be—a Messenger—I have asked for and obtained certain Powers. Do not, I pray you, think that these Powers constitute my Message. They do no more than illustrate it. Such Powers as have been conferred upon me are within the reach—not of all—he looked, perhaps unconsciously, at Lavinia Medlock—‘but of some in this room’—his eyes fell upon Hetty Medlock, who sat in the front beside Cicely. ‘Those who desire the Ancient Way for the sake of getting the Powers will never go far along that Way, which is only to be trodden by the pure and unselfish. Listen!’

He threw up both hands and seemed listening expectantly. In a few moments there were heard faint sounds of music far off. The sounds grew nearer and louder, though the strain was still soft and the music seemed to be

hovering over the operator's head. Then it slowly receded and died away in the distance.

'This,' Tom whispered, 'is a very good beginning. It beats the dark room and the concertina.'

The *habitués* of the house—those who were accustomed to manifestations—nodded their heads approvingly. This was, certainly, so far, better than the ordinary business. Still, they looked on calmly critical. Music at a séance is not an original feature. Mr. Emanuel Chick scowled, perhaps because he did not understand how it was done: perhaps because he felt himself ill-used by his own spirits, who had never consented to vouchsafe music except in a darkened room.

When the music died away it was followed by a most melodious tinkling of silver bells, which behaved exactly like the music, drawing nearer, tinkling immediately above Herr Paulus's head and then receding.

'Good business again, Dodo,' Tom whispered; 'but old. We've heard the bells

before. To be sure the room was always dark. Wonder how the beggar does it.'

Then lo! a Miracle! Herr Paulus suddenly threw up both his arms and there were seen fluttering into his hands two light and thin packets of silver paper. Where did they come from? Observe that the room was quite full of people: that they were all looking on: that there was a blaze of light: and that the testimony of all—all but one—would have been exactly the same. 'I saw,' they would have said, 'the papers fall from the ceiling into Herr Paulus's hands.' The one exception was the young man of science. Tom, more prudent, would have said, 'The papers seemed to fall into the man's hands.' This, it will be observed, involves great reservations.

Herr Paulus gave the packets into the hands of Lady Augusta.

'Do not open them yet,' he said. 'You are going to witness a really remarkable illustration of the Powers possessed by my Friends. Take it as a special mark of their favour.'

Then he turned and surveyed his audience

without the least touch of triumph in his eyes; and he did not, as Mr. Emanuel Chick would have done, proceed to call attention to the wonderful manifestation of the spirits. He looked round the faces slowly, as if searching for something. They represented all the stages of bewilderment, from the cataleptic condition of those who believe everything they see, to the irritated and puzzled condition of those who see and yet preserve something of the critical faculty. Mr. Emanuel Chick from his position in the rear watched the operator jealously; Lavinia Medlock, enviously; Tom, suspiciously.

‘The fellow conjures,’ said Tom, ‘as well as Maskelyne and Cooke.’

‘Hush!’ said Sibyl. ‘Perhaps he is going to do something much finer. See.’

Did you ever see the mild Hindoo perform his feats? When you have done so, you will go about for the rest of your life declaring that the impossible became possible: that miracles were performed before your eyes compared with which the saintly records are

poor and tame. Men are decapitated before the eyes of the audience and then restored to their heads; boys are stabbed and gashed all over without consequent injury; deadly snakes are handled with impunity; dry sticks blossom like Aaron's rod. Why, a great Indian Emperor has set down in writing, so that all may read, how some jugglers came to him and performed, before him and all his Court, twenty-eight distinct miracles, each one more wonderful than its predecessor. Do you think they actually do the tricks? Not so; and yet those who tell of them do not lie! What happens then? If one could answer that question one could produce exactly the same effects as those for which these same jugglers got the Imperial gift of fifty thousand rupees, many years before the depreciation of that coin.

'Some of you,' said Herr Paulus, 'have heard of certain Orientals who possess powers which are now unknown to the West. I say now, because there is evidence that in the Middle Ages, and even later, there have been

many who had attained in some measure to these powers. There have been monks who could converse with the spirits. There was a nun named Hildegardis who in moments of rapture could compel the other nuns to think exactly as she pleased. There were also the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit, who arrived at great Powers: and the so-called Friends of God, who were also Spiritualists of a high order. It is, therefore, no new thing that you are invited to observe. Among the Powers are those of conversing with each other without respect to distance: of joining each other instantaneously: of knowing what their friends are saying and thinking: of telling what is in the minds of those who are not their friends: of making people see what they order, say what they wish, think what they choose. These Powers are not born with us: they are conferred or acquired as one advances in true Wisdom. You know that as you climb higher the air grows clearer and the vision sharper. It is so with the Ancient Way. Or to take another illustration, if you dig wells

in the ground they will naturally fill with water. You do not pour water into them. The waters fill them by the laws of nature. I do not pretend to these Powers in their highest form. But I will try to show you what some of them mean.'

He looked again about the room. All faces were turned towards him, all eyes looked into his, and to some it seemed as if his eyes saw through them into the hidden soul. But perhaps that was due to the excitement of the nerves.

The blind girl, Cicely Langston, sat immediately before him. Beside her sat her companion, Hetty Medlock. Cicely was sitting in her customary impassive attitude, her hands in her lap, but her cheek was flushed, and she was excited by the strange music and the bells, and the wondrous talk about supernatural powers of the young man with the soft and musical voice. Her fingers nervously opened and closed, her lips trembled, half parted.

'Hetty,' she whispered, 'why is he stopping? Tell me—tell me—what is he doing?'

‘He is asking Mrs. Tracy Hanley to play something. It is she who is playing.’

‘Oh! it is coarse and common after the other music,’ said Cicely. ‘Go on, Hetty, what next?’

‘Oh! is it true? Is it true? Can it be true after all?’ A strange question for the daughter of a Medium. Hetty had turned pale, and her eyes were fixed upon Herr Paulus. ‘Now he is standing quite still: he is looking slowly round the room: he is looking at Sibyl: and at Lady Augusta. He is looking—oh! he is looking—at Me!’

She said no more. The magician’s eyes met hers, and she rose and walked across the room before them all, and stood before him.

‘Oh! my daughter! Oh! my child!’ cried Lavinia Medlock. But the accents were those of joy and surprise and not of terror. Never before had she seen that look in her daughter’s face; and it betokened—she recognised it with delight—a higher gift than ever had been hers—the strange and wonderful gift of clairvoyance.

‘Sit down,’ said Herr Paulus.

There were some who said afterwards that before Hetty left her seat there was no chair in the middle of the room, but this wants confirmation.

Hetty obeyed. Then with a single motion of his hand he seemed to close her eyes. The girl was now leaning back in the chair, pale, with set lips and closed eyes. Her hands were lying in her lap, tightly clasped. She did not look as if she slept, but as if she was waiting to do something—one knew not what.

Herr Paulus bent over her, and it seemed as if he breathed gently upon her head.

‘We inhale oxygen and hydrogen into the natural lungs,’ he explained. ‘With the spiritual lungs we breathe what for want of another name has been called aura. My aura has fallen upon this young lady’s head and has entered into her soul. She will now, as you will see, think only as I shall direct her.’

‘It ought not to be allowed,’ Tom murmured.

‘Why not?’ said Sibyl, the experienced.

‘I have seen them like this dozens of times, and it never does anybody any harm.’

She spoke as one who has been watching these phenomena all her life, and thought little of them and expected nothing from them.

‘This,’ cried Mr. Emanuel Chick loudly, ‘is nothing in the world but pure mesmerism.’

‘I beg,’ said Mr. Cyrus Brudenel firmly, ‘that there may be no interruption at all! After the séance anyone who wishes shall have the opportunity of speaking, or of producing, if he can, by his own powers similar manifestations.’

Mr. Emanuel Chick subsided, but with an effort. Herr Paulus, for his part, behaved like a practised speaker at a public meeting when some one unexpectedly gets up in the middle of his speech to propose an amendment—that is to say, he stopped speaking, but took no other notice of the interruption, treating the thing as if it had no kind of connection with himself. Meantime, Mrs. Tracy Hanley went on playing mechanically, but wondering if the

music and the bells and the leaves fluttering from the ceiling could be secured for her Sunday evenings. Like many sensible women, Mrs. Tracy Hanley considered the wisdom and the genius of Man: his science, art and letters; his inventions and his discoveries; his skill and dexterity; his genius and his ingenuity; as shadows and unsubstantial things compared with the solid realities of society.

‘I will now ask Lady Augusta,’ said Herr Paulus, ‘to give me one of the papers in her hand—any one. Thank you. There is a drawing on the paper. I command this young lady to see, in her vision, the subject of this drawing.’

There was silence for a space. Hetty Medlock made no movement nor any sign of life. Herr Paulus gave back the papers to Lady Augusta and made another single pass with his right hand. Hetty Medlock opened her eyes and looked about her.

‘Where am I?’ she asked.

‘You are safe—with friends. Do not fear. You have had a Vision in your sleep. Can

you recall it? Can you tell us of what you dreamed?’

She hesitated.

‘Nay—tell us the whole. There is nothing to fear.’

‘I was in a country—I know not where—I was happy, much happier than I am in this world.’ She spoke with a kind of constraint, as if reluctantly. ‘I was free to do what I pleased and to go where I pleased. I could have what I wished—pictures and music, and a beautiful house and gardens, and money to give away. I was not only rich, but able to write the most wonderful things. The people sang my songs and I was powerful. Then they brought me out and crowned me Queen!’

‘Do you remember the place and manner of your coronation?’

‘Yes, perfectly.’

‘Lady Augusta, will you kindly give me the paper I have just been holding in my hands? Yes—thank you. Will you tell me, Miss Medlock, if you recognise this picture?’

Hetty took the paper. There was a water-

colour drawing upon it, though the paper was thin. The girl looked at it and cried out in amazement.

‘Oh ! it is the very scene. And this is I myself whom they are crowning. Oh ! give me the picture.’

‘You shall have it when everybody has seen it. Let me pass it round.’

There was no doubt possible that the girl had seen the crowning of herself. The dream itself was such as a girl, poor, young, not too clever, might easily dream—a vision of the unattainable. Yes, here was drawn in pale tints Hetty herself, large-eyed, unmistakable, clad in a wonderful dress, going forth in grandeur, the people shouting around her.

And the drawing was good. Mr. Cyrus Brudenel held the paper up to the light.

‘The watermark,’ he said, ‘is Petersburg.’

‘I daresay it was painted there,’ said Herr Paulus, carelessly. ‘It must have been painted somewhere. Lady Augusta, I have done what I promised. Let me make one more experi-

ment. May I ask Miss Cicely Langston to take Miss Medlock's place?'

'Oh! I say,' cried Tom. 'Not my cousin.'

'No harm—not the least harm shall be done to Miss Langston,' said Herr Paulus. 'I pledge my word as a—not as a gentleman—but as the Messenger of my Friends.'

'I doubt the security,' Tom murmured;—and, satisfied with the repartee, which seemed rather sharp, he made no further opposition.

But the blind girl had risen at the first invitation and walked without guidance straight to the spot where the chair was placed. Then she sat down as if she had neither the power nor the inclination to resist.

'The deepest wish of the blind is to see,' said Herr Paulus. 'I restore to you, for a few moments, Cicely Langston, the power of sight. Tell me what you see.'

'I can see,' she replied, but in a strange voice, and without the least movement of hands or head; and her eyes remained closed. 'I can see. The room is full of people. You are before me. You have dark hair and black

eyes ; there is a white flower in your button-hole, and you have a gold chain with a thing like a beetle hanging from it. You are looking at me. Yes. I will look round the room'—but he had not spoken. 'I can see the others, but not so well as I can see you. Their faces are blurred. Why is that? I see Sibyl and Hetty and Tom, and many others ; but they are not so clear and distinct as you are. And now they have all faded away and it is dark again.'

'I cannot restore her sight permanently,' said the young magician. 'The time may come when this and many other things which now seem impossible will be in our Power.'

'Oh ! I saw the room. I saw all of you. Oh ! it was wonderful—wonderful,' said the blind girl, reaching out her helpless hands.

Sibyl stepped forward and took her hands and led her back to her place.

'You have been persuaded, dear,' she said. 'You are among us—with your friends. Nothing has really happened. Nothing of the least importance.'

‘Nothing of the least importance,’ repeated Herr Paulus, gravely.

Then the people wondered what would come next.

‘Since the séance has concluded,’ said Mr. Emanuel Chick, ‘at least I suppose it has concluded—I think I may offer, as an older man, our congratulations to our younger brother on his progress in the mesmeric art. The display of mesmeric power is very creditable—very creditable indeed. So far we have seen nothing that could not be done by pure mesmerism. But I understood that we came here to receive communications from the Spirits. In this house we are accustomed to converse freely with the Spirits. We have been offered a mesmeric performance. That’s all I wanted to say. A very good performance indeed ; but it is not conversing with the Spirits.’ He tossed his head and sat down with a sniff.

‘It is not for me,’ Herr Paulus replied with dignity, ‘to discuss the things that have happened. Perhaps the mesmeric force may

explain the whole of the phenomena you have witnessed to this gentleman's entire satisfaction. If so, I have nothing to object. As for conversing with Spirits, we converse daily and hourly with those whom I am allowed to call my Friends. These are the wise Spirits of Humanity, living and dead, around us, here and everywhere. They converse with me without the intervention of knocks and raps. They tell me more in a quarter of an hour than you in England have learned from the raps in forty years. They have spoken to you twice already. They will speak, if you wish it, once more. Is there any here who would like a Message of Consolation or of Hope? Do not mock my Friends, or it may be bad for us. Let no one speak who is not deeply and earnestly desirous of such a message.'

The party sat perfectly still and silent. Then Cicely Langston spoke again.

'Tell me,' she said, 'about my brother.'

'Your brother? Who is your brother? Oh! Do not tell me. Yes—now I know—now I know. He has been gone for five

years and has sent no letter, and you fear that he is dead. Yes. . . . I understand.' He spoke quickly and without connection, as if he was listening to some one at his ear. 'I understand. He has been at sea. His name is Percival—Sir Percival Langston. He is a Baronet. He is not dead—he lives—he is well.'

'Oh!' Cicely burst into tears. 'Is this true? Do you really know?'

'I know nothing,' said Herr Paulus. 'I have been told, just now, since you stood up, Miss Langston.'

'Can it be true?'

'My Friends are always true. But you shall see more. Sit down and raise your eyes to me. Think that you can see me.'

Again he breathed upon her head.

'Lady Augusta,' he said, 'you have a second packet. I was wondering why the second packet came. Please give it to me.'

He held it, still wrapped in the tissue paper, flat between both his hands.

'Tell me,' he said, 'what you see.'

She replied, just as Hetty had done, as if she had no choice.

‘I see a ship rolling about in the night on a rough sea, under a black sky. It is a sailing ship. The decks are wet and the waves are breaking over her bows as she plunges. At the wheel I see my brother. He is dressed in big boots and a waterproof. He is a common sailor by his dress, and he is steering the ship. He does not think of me at all: his mind is full of religion: he cannot see me as I see him. Oh! I see his face and I know it is my brother, but I cannot tell why. Percival!’ she cried, holding out her arms, ‘Percival! speak to me—look at me.’

Some of the ladies began to cry, and Sibyl again stepped forward to support the girl.

‘You have played with her enough,’ she said. ‘Impostor or honest man—I know not which—you have played with her enough.’

‘Your brother will return,’ said Herr Paulus. ‘Sleep in peace to-night. Is it playing with her to calm her heart with the assurance that her brother is safe?’

He opened the packet in his hand and showed Sibyl the picture within.

The picture was what Cicely had described. There was the stern of a ship and there was the man at the wheel: in the blackness of the night one could see little but the shrouds and the dim outline of the ship's bulwarks.

‘Who is that man?’ he asked Sibyl.

‘He is Sir Percival Langston,’ she replied.

Herr Paulus gave the picture to Lady Augusta, and it was handed round. Then a great awe fell upon the multitude. They were in the presence of one who could compel the truth. He had proved his power. Even Tom Langston scoffed no longer, though he would not give in.

Herr Paulus returned again to the middle of the room and spoke to the people, now silent and terrified. He spoke slowly, gravely, and with the utmost dignity.

‘I have done what I was commanded to do this evening. You have seen something of the powers possessed by my Friends—alive or

dead. It is not some lower and baser spirit of the other world, who may show himself, as you have proved over and over again, untrustworthy, fickle, and even frivolous,'—Lavinia Medlock groaned and hung her head as one who is the victim of misplaced confidence—'it is a man—whether alive or dead, whether in the flesh or out of it, matters nothing—who is wise and benevolent, who has acquired powers of which you cannot even dream—who has spoken to you this evening. Nay, there are many men whom I call my Friends, but their action is as one. The Manifestation has been made—the Teaching will follow—to those who are accepted.'

And then he retired into the throng and became only a simple guest, like the rest. The séance, if that can be called a séance where there was not so much as a single rap, was concluded. But it had ended in a Function which gave a solemnity to the evening. Out of the Unknown had come a manifestation of a kind never before experienced. The sightless saw ; the absent became visible ; the

blind sister recognised the brother whom she had never seen before ; she asked for news of him and she received an answer in this strange and mysterious manner.

I cannot omit to add a concluding incident in the history of the evening.

Both pictures vanished.

They had been handed round and they vanished. Perhaps some one stole them and now keeps them secretly as precious spirit paintings ; perhaps they were drawn away as they came. The most diligent inquiry failed to trace them, and they have never since been seen.

Mr. Emanuel Chick stepped briskly forward and held out his hand with fine effusion.

‘Herr Paulus,’ he said heartily, but with a gulp, ‘I congratulate you. Don’t mind what I said about the mesmerism. Lor ! I recognised a brother from the very first. We are fellow-workers, and we’ve got lots to teach each other.’

The poor old Professor looked deplorably common and shabby beside this handsome

young man. His nose was red : his cheeks were puffed : he had taken at dinner as much wine as he could lay hands upon : and his voice was thick.

‘Pardon me,’ Herr Paulus replied coldly, and without seeing the proffered hand, ‘I think that you have nothing to teach me. I am certain that I have nothing which I shall teach you. We are not, I assure you, either Brothers or Fellow-Workers.’

Emanuel Chick fell back, snubbed and disgusted. He has never since quite recovered the effects of that public snub. Indeed, he still spends long hours at times in trying to think what would have been the proper retort ; and he can find none. There are cases in which the proper retort, which should be at once dignified and epigrammatic, is extremely difficult to find. For instance, there were once two men, both members of the Utter Bar, who met in the courts of the Temple—the one in wig and gown hastening to Court, the other in a pot hat, lounging to his chambers. Quoth the former to the latter,

‘That’s a pretty kind of hat to wear in the Temple.’ The other waited till his friend was gone a little distance and well within hearing of a circle of men. Then he replied loudly :—

‘Not ’at, my friend ; not ’at. Hat. Hat. H.A.T.’

The retort to this remark has never yet been discovered, any more than the retort to Herr Paulus.

Mr. Emanuel Chick speaks of this evening still, with contempt, as one thrown away upon a bit of mesmerism and something artful done with the ceiling and some bits of paper. ‘As for the music,’ he says, ‘a confederate on the stairs with an accordion did the trick. Probably a footman. I’ve known spirits—real disembodied spirits—who would have done more than that for me. The picture business I call contemptible. It looked new at the moment, but it was contemptible. I’m old, I suppose, though, and out of fashion. But to think of the things I’ve actually done myself in that very room ! Why, sir, when

I was twenty years younger I have set every table spinning like a whipping top. I've been carried up into the air by the spirits. I've been taken out of one window and brought in at another: they've written on the ceiling for me: they've sent messages by hundreds: comic messages, some of them, because they will have their joke, and why not? Why not, I ask you? Bless you, the room has been crammed with spirits—Peter, Katey, Joseph, Alexander—ay! dozens of 'em, and all willing and wishful to talk and be comfortable. And all he's got to show is a bit of fluttering paper and a mesmeric trick and a brazen, impudent, arrogant, supercilious cheek. It makes a man sick, sir, sick, to see the women 'umbugged and only wanting more.'

That, in fact, is what people always do want—More. The smallest, briefest glimpse behind the Veil, the least glimmer of light in the blackness around us, makes us only long for More. To-night afforded the clearest vision of supernatural powers which had yet been vouchsafed to seekers in any age. Things

had been done which could not be explained by any theory of mesmeric force—strange, weird, and unexpected things ; none of the ordinary machinery of raps, no darkness of the room, no sitting round tables, no singing of hymns, no uncomfortable suspicion of tricks, no vulgar Medium, uneducated and coarse, holding out his hand to be paid beforehand, but a gentleman, refined in manners, language, and appearance, who would take no money.

They came—these friends of Lady Augusta—prepared to witness the common feats of spiritualism ; some of them expected to go away and declare that the Spirits had written on the ceiling in the dark ; others looked for another example of the well-known frauds : people banged on the head with paper rolled up in long cylinders, writing on the ceiling by means of a piece of charcoal in a pair of lazy tongs, the Medium capering about the room in a white shawl, and so forth.

But there were none of these things. The believers went away with awe, and yet with

their hearts aglow. And the incredulous felt that here was something which could not be accounted for by any of the previously discovered tricks and machinery. Mesmerism? But mesmerism will not cause pictures to descend from the ceiling, nor will it bring music into the air—nor will it cause blind girls to see and to know their long lost brothers.

Alas! There was no More. And presently the people began to break up.

CHAPTER VI.

GOOD NIGHT.

WHILE they were slowly dispersing there was a little opportunity for whispered confidences. Lavinia Medlock, for instance—she had once been so truly great that nobody called her Mrs. Medlock, but Lavinia Medlock, just as one says George Eliot—succeeded in getting Lady Augusta to herself. She was one of those who always want to whisper confidentially, and, whatever she had to say, always led the conversation round to herself and her own wants.

‘Oh! dear Lady Augusta’—she sighed and clasped her hands—‘Oh! it was too delightful. Nobody but you would have found and secured such a man. Oh! how fortunate we have been! Such Powers!

Such a Fulness! Such an Abundance; and what an Outpouring upon my poor Hetty. Oh! he makes us poor common Mediums feel so cheap and small. Oh, I should think he is too great to be ever taken in by a lying spirit, as happens sometimes to the best of us. Think of what I am and what I used to be. Oh! dear—dear—and I so trusted Peter!’

‘Yes, Mrs. Medlock, we are now on a different plane altogether.’

‘We are, indeed; and yet one feels, after all, that one has been a worker in the same field. Lady Augusta, it is already whispered in the room’—here she became very confidential—‘that you are going to found a College—actually a College—for the Pursuit of Research.’

‘Really, it is the first I have heard of it.’

‘Oh! yes: it is confidently whispered, and I would so gladly hellup.’

‘Well, Mrs. Medlock, I assure you that I know nothing of it. Any developments that may follow do not depend upon me.’

‘Not altogether. But everybody knows

that you are our real Leader, and I would so gladly hellup. And oh! Lady Augusta, you saw my Hetty—poor Hetty!—I could never teach her anything—and to-night she has come out so beautifully. There is Clairvoyance in her of the highest order. If she would only be guided by me!’

‘You must not teach her to think of money, Mrs. Medlock, or you will spoil her.’

‘Well — perhaps — not yet. However, I hope she will keep better company among the spirits than her poor mother could contrive. And oh! Lady Augusta, a College wants secretaries and clerks, and how gladly would we hellup. Hetty could do the spirit work, and I could receive the fees, you know.’

‘All this is really premature.’

‘It is exactly the work for which I was fitted. I have been looking for it all my life. I could give you so much hellup. And oh! if you did but know how badly I want the work. The last society is broken up, and—and—here is that Mr. Rudge. Do you know why he was turned out of his last situation?’

Lavinia retired and the Rev. Benjamin Rudge advanced, smiling and unctuous.

‘A rich treat, Lady Augusta. A rich treat, indeed. Before retiring to rest this evening I shall commit a full account of the manifestations to paper. It has been an evening full of surprises and of instruction: an evening at once intellectual, spiritual, and religious—especially religious. The future will see magnificent developments of what we must now call, I suppose, the Ancient Way. As the movement grows and spreads—as it spreads and r-r-r-ramifies’—he swept space circularly with his hands—‘you will want an Organiser, a Lecturer, a Secretary. You may command me, Lady Augusta. My services are at your disposal. Poor Lavinia Medlock! It was kind to ask her here. You know why she lost her place the other day? The usual trouble,’ he whispered.

The worst of Spiritualism is that there is so broad a Fringe. Every Cause has its Fringe, broad or narrow. Spiritualism has so very broad a Fringe. Lavinia Medlock, for

instance, now that people no longer ran after her, was fain to lecture for anybody who would employ her : she would act as Secretary to any Society ; she would collect moneys to be applied to good objects ; and her enemies said that there was always, sooner or later, trouble about those moneys. The Rev. Benjamin Rudge, on the other hand, the Historiographer of the Cause, had enemies too. They were constantly raking up old passages in his life—for he was no longer young—which he himself would willingly have forgotten. It is unmanly to rake up things which their authors would fain bury in oblivion. He had no cure of souls, and he darkly whispered that the Bishops were in league to keep him out of any. He had been connected with societies, and terminated his connection in consequence of what he himself called the bad business habits which are always found among scholars and gentlemen ; but his enemies called them by a different name. Whenever he stepped to the front into the public gaze somebody always wrote

nasty letters, asking if this was the same reverend gentleman who ten years ago did so and so. He had written a book or two, on subjects not commercially valuable, he occasionally got some hack literary work, and was generally attached to some unsuccessful journal. But concerning this evening's work he saw his way, by the exercise of a rather limited imagination, to write a paper or two which would be worth a month's dinners.

Then Sibyl advanced to the young Prophet. She intended to speak her mind to him boldly. But for the moment she was stricken with awe like the rest.

'Herr Paulus,' she said, earnestly, 'do you, in very truth, possess these powers? Are you only mocking a poor girl who lives in constant anxiety about her brother?'

'Indeed, Miss Brudenel,' he replied, earnestly, 'you do me an injustice by the mere suspicion.'

'Other Mediums have been asked, but they told us nothing. Yet it is easy to deceive a girl through her affections.'

‘Miss Brudenel, I assure you on my honour——’

‘It was the likeness of my cousin—but in a common sailor’s dress.’

‘I do not understand that any more than you do. My Friends permit me to tell you more. Your cousin is, in fact, a common sailor at this moment. He is in mid-Atlantic, on board the ‘Willing Bride,’ of Quebec, sailing vessel, laden with timber, and bound for the port of London.’

‘Is it possible? And he will come safe to shore?’

‘I do not know. Believe me I have told you all that I know—all that I have learned—from my Friends.’

‘I thank you, Herr Paulus.’

Sibyl retreated, and a gentleman slipped forward who held out his hand.

‘To our better acquaintance, Herr Paulus.’ He had a commanding presence and a remarkably deep voice. ‘My name is Kilburn—Athelstan Kilburn—not quite unknown in

the Spiritual world here, though perhaps in Abyssinia——’

‘My Friends know everybody, Mr. Kilburn. I confess, however, that they have not instructed me as to your history.’

‘Never mind, that will follow. My history, sir, is the history of the Cause in this country from the very beginning. I identified myself with it even before my friend Brudenel came into it. We are coarse and common operators compared with you, Herr Paulus. But such as we are I shall be glad to tell you all about us. There have been Rogues among us—plenty of Rogues among us: and lying spirits have vexed us. But you shall hear. And you have come to instruct us—me among the number, I hope. Good night, Herr Paulus.’ His voice sank deep, as if he was going to sink into the earth.

His place was taken by the Rev. Amelius Horton, the Senior Fellow of King Henry’s College, Cambridge. Mr. Horton’s friends were perhaps right in considering his manner

as flighty, but there was confidence in his assertions.

‘Pray, sir,’ he asked, ‘have you ever turned your thoughts in the direction of healing?’

‘Sometimes.’

‘I possess, myself, the gift of healing in a somewhat remarkable degree. Only last Sunday, in the Gray’s Inn Road, I made a cripple throw away his crutches and walk upright.’

‘Does this power remain always with you?’

‘N—no. I confess that it does not. It is fitful. If it were steady, I should establish myself as a healer and close all the hospitals.’

‘I have been enabled myself, on occasions, to exercise this power. The last time was a year ago, when I healed a whole village in Abyssinia, where every inhabitant was stricken with the cholera.’

Mr. Horton gazed at him with admiration, mixed, perhaps, with a little incredulity.

‘My dear sir,’ he said, ‘if you have that power, ‘why not rid the whole world of disease?’

‘It would be a truly useful work, if it were permitted ; but I will answer your question by another, Mr. Horton. In your ordination as Priest, I believe the Bishop gave you power to absolve sin.’

‘Certainly.’

‘There was no condition attached?’

‘Certainly not.’

‘You possess, then, a much more precious gift than I, and since you have this power, Mr. Horton, why do you allow the sins of humanity to weigh upon us for an instant? Absolve us all, dear sir. Let us all start from this moment with a clean slate. As soon as the sins of mankind are taken away, I will rid them of their diseases.’

Mr. Horton made no reply.

Then other guests came and murmured words of applause and congratulations, and of hope that this evening would be followed by many others equal in interest and in wonder.

Very pretty things they said, and the young man replied to each with an admirable grace and ease. And to the ladies the wonderful charm of his eyes brought conviction as to his truth and sincerity. As Lady Augusta prophesied, he was already a success. The last was Mrs. Tracy Hanley.

‘I want to ask you to my Sunday evenings, Herr Paulus. We are quiet people : there is no crush with us : you will find in my rooms rest and sympathy—I feel that after those manifestations you will need repose—and sympathy. You will not be asked to exhibit your truly marvellous powers : and you will find only friends—true friends—who have learned to trust and love each other.’

‘You are really most kind,’ the young man replied, astonished at this unexpected proffer of friendship from a complete stranger. ‘I am, however, in Lady Augusta’s hands.’

‘That will not prevent you from coming. Then I shall expect you, Herr Paulus, next Sunday evening?’

‘Perhaps not next Sunday. I never make

appointments, because I may be called away by my Friends, or ordered upon some special service. Will you kindly let me come on any Sunday evening when I am free?’

‘Certainly, we shall always be happy to see you. Not as a lion, understand. I never have any lions.’ This was quite true, but oh! how devoutly she wished that she could have one or two in the season. ‘Only a very quiet circle of friends, with music and talk. Where the people are anxious to make each other happy the talk is always pleasant. Mere wit—mere epigram—is apt to wound. Sometimes my friends do what they can to amuse each other. If you feel disposed—but no: you shall feel yourself perfectly at liberty, you shall not come hampered by any feelings of obligation. We shall lay ourselves out to amuse you, Herr Paulus, and you shall repose and be happy.’

Was there ever a kinder or more gracious lady? She pressed his hand, smiled most sweetly, and retired.

‘All the same,’ she observed to her hus-

band—he was something in the City, where he toiled every day from ten till five, going out with his wife in the evening, and taking a back seat from eleven till one, two, and three in the morning, so that he really was a happy man—‘All the same, if he does come I will have something out of him, if it is only a thought reading.’

And now the people were all gone, and only the house party remained. When the door shut upon the last of them, Mr. Cyrus Brudenel spoke. Hitherto he had said nothing : now he spoke. When a leader speaks the broad earth trembles. He spoke with a certain tremor in his voice which showed that he was deeply moved, and he spoke with that earnestness of conviction which always made Sibyl feel so guilty, and he began by grasping Herr Paulus by the hand.

‘This night,’ he said, ‘marks a new departure in Spiritual Research. Herr Paulus, I thank you in the name of all those who, like myself, have believed, through cruel disappointments and most unworthy deceptions, in

the future of our Cause. We have been like blind men—I see it now—waiting for a guide : or like ignorant men in a labyrinth trying all ways but the true way. What use to us have been our Chicks and our Medlocks? What power had they? What control over the spirits? None. You have been sent by those you call your Friends to show us the way. It is no longer by the fitful light shown by deceitful and vicious spirits that we shall try to advance, but by the steady glow of the lantern held up to us by your Friends. We thank your Friends through you. We have tried to maintain the constancy of our faith, but there have been times, I confess it, when our feet have seemed to be placed on the shaky and uncertain turf of a hidden quagmire. Now, thanks to your Friends, we stand at last on SOLID ROCK. At last, I say, on SOLID ROCK !’

‘ You stand, indeed, upon the SOLID ROCK,’ repeated Herr Paulus, gently.

‘ Long ago, before I half understood

whither our steps would lead us, I resolved that this house and all in it should be dedicated to the sublime Research of Spiritual Truth. I have adhered to this resolution. I have given up my ambitions, my time, and my friends. My wife has given up her whole life cheerfully to the work. I have dedicated and set apart my daughter to be the Vestal Virgin of this great Cause. If there is aught else that I can give, command me in that as well.'

'My Friends will take what is useful,' Herr Paulus replied, with a quick glance at Sibyl, the Vestal, in whose eyes and in the quick flush of her cheek he saw rebellion. 'Perhaps they will ask of you less than what you are willing to give. But your reward will be tenfold what you can give.'

'And what—oh! what can we give you yourself?' asked Lady Augusta.

'Nothing, except your friendship, and—perhaps—your love. I want no money. My friends keep me supplied with all that I need.

See. This is my purse.' He drew it out and opened it. There were three or four small foreign copper coins in it. 'That is my slender store. Food you can give me and shelter.'

'All the house shall be at your service,' said Mr. Brudenel.

'Let me come and go unquestioned.'

'You shall have perfect liberty.'

'There are times when I may have to keep my room for days or even weeks together, if my Friends desire my presence, and I have to be absent in the spirit.'

'You shall do in all things as you wish,' said Lady Augusta.

'Do you take meals like other people?' Sibyl asked, coldly. 'Do people absent in the spirit eat?'

'The earthly body takes food.'

'In that case, Herr Paulus, let us descend once more to earth. Please remember that breakfast is served at half-past nine and luncheon at half-past one. There are no gongs in this house. Tea goes on here at five, if you care for tea. Good night, Herr

Paulus.' She bent her head slightly and without the least enthusiasm. She had had time to recover from her surprise, and reflected that, after all, he was but a Medium. 'Come, Cicely, dear. Good night, mamma.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE SMOKING ROOM.

IN Tom Langston's study, or workshop, the two young men, the Prophet of the Ancient Way and the Student of the Modern Way, sat on opposite sides of the fire. No two young men, apart from their professions, could be more unlike in appearance. The one ruddy, healthy, athletic, tall of stature, long of limb, and broad of shoulder, toughened and hardened by a thousand athletic sports, cricket matches, football matches, lawn-tennis matches, and boat races, brave and comely and tenacious : the other thin and slight of figure, yet not fragile, as active and as springy as a young Frenchman, his tread as alert as a leopard, his eyes as quick as a hawk's, his features as delicate as those of any girl, his long nervous fingers never for a moment in repose.

They both had cigarettes. Hermes, Thrice Greatest, would himself take tobacco if he lived in these days, and so would the two Bacons, Roger and Francis. Before each stood a glass of effervescent water, innocent of whisky.

They sat in silence and looked at each other furtively, for one was suspicious and the other was conscious of the suspicion, and, besides, was now for the first time in his life alone with a young English gentleman, a creature he had never before encountered. Apart from a natural irritation at feeling himself the object of suspicion—a thing which every Prophet has to face—he was asking himself, whether, with all the trouble he had taken to overcome certain early-contracted manners and customs, he had really acquired the tone which this young man possessed, of belonging naturally and by birth to polite society.

‘You are thinking of me,’ he said presently.

‘That is not a difficult piece of thought reading,’ Tom replied. ‘I was.’

‘You were wondering who I am.’

‘More than that. I was wondering how you do it, first; and why you do it, next.’

‘And you mistrust me.’

‘That also is not so difficult to perceive. I mistrust every man who pretends to supernatural powers, whether he calls himself Medium or Mumbo Jumbo.’

‘And you cannot clear your mind of the suspicion that I am come to plunder your guardian, and that I live by the exhibition of certain—may I say—Powers—or shall I say—Arts?’

‘Well,’ asked Tom, ‘let me ask the question once for all, why the DEVIL do you go about the world masquerading and pretending?’

‘What do I pretend?’

‘You assume a name which does not belong to you. It is a German name and you are an American.’

The young man reddened slightly. There is always a weak point in every man’s armour, and he wished that his nationality should not be discovered by his speech.

‘I have not pretended to be a German. I pretend to no country. Believe it or not—my name was imposed upon me by my Friends. It is not, of course, the name of my birth. If I were to tell you my whole history, you would regard me as a greater humbug than you do at present.’

‘Why?’

‘Because I should have to tell you so much that you could not possibly, with your prejudices and ignorances, even pretend to believe. How else, pray, do I pretend?’

‘You pretend that your performances of this evening were the work of spirits.’

‘Let me remind you that I did not say so. I said they were the work of my Friends.’

‘You spoke of a message.’

‘True. I have a message. From my Friends. I am here to deliver it. My message is for all who will hear it—to those of this house just because I have come here first—to you if you please.’

‘Well, then, take another cigarette. If it was the work of your Friends you will not

mind, I daresay, getting them to repeat it in this room. Let us have a flight of papers from my ceiling, or a little music in the air ; or you may, if you please, try to make me think what you please.'

Herr Paulus shrugged his shoulders.

'My message,' he said, 'is not for the incredulous. Let me look in your eyes. Steady. Look me straight in the eyes. So. Why I might spend a lifetime upon you without any result. You would never be able to understand that there was anything in the world beyond what you see. You have not the first and most elementary sense required of those who try the Ancient Way. You believe in nothing but phenomena.'

'Thank you ; yet I do not believe all that I see.'

'You saw that I compelled two ladies to think as I chose.'

'That was pure mesmerism. Old Chick saw through that at once.'

'You mean the spirit rapper. Yes, I know his kind. It was by something of the

nature of that force which you call mesmerism that these ladies were moved to think and act as they did. Many people of the lowest kind have this force, but cannot use it aright. In the hands of a person like your friend Chick, it is like the electricity of a machine exhibited at a fair to make the rustics gape. In the hands of my Friends it is a force far subtler, far more potent than you can even conceive. This force is the basis of all spiritualistic influence.'

'It sounds pretty, but isn't it rather a waste?'

'Without this force,' Herr Paulus went on, regardless of this rude interruption, 'the communion of minds is impossible, and the understanding of speech would be impossible; living men could not influence and advise and lead each other; the power of oratory would be gone: the poet's words would have no meaning: the writer would write in vain: spirits living would no longer be able to converse with spirits dead: distant friends could not converse——'

'Come, I say.'

‘You believe nothing. You think that all is answered when you explain a thing by saying that it is mesmerism. Scientific men thought that all was explained when they discovered the law of gravity. But the discovery of the law does not explain the force which is governed by the law. So the explanations of phenomena by referring them to mesmerism do not really explain them. Not at all. Mesmerism of the higher kind is the machinery by which we work. Ask your friend Chick to do what I did to-night. He can, I suppose, mesmerise in the old-fashioned clumsy method, and on patients who are easily moved. But when he has got them into the mesmeric trance what can he do more? Nothing. Why? Because he has got to the end of his power.’

‘Do something with me, now; let me prove your powers?’

‘No; I can do nothing with you or for you. Why should I try to convert you? It is not my business. If all the world refuse to believe, it will not harm me.’

‘Then why did you come here?’

‘To speak to those whom it may concern.
To give my message.’

‘Did you make any inquiries about us
before you came?’

‘Of course. On my way from St. Petersburg I was informed by my Friends of many particulars concerning this family. I will tell you some of them. I do not pretend to know more than I am told. Mr. Cyrus Brudenel, your guardian, is a man who ardently desires to be a Spiritualist and to acquire power. He is not, however, a medium, and he never will be. He has been greatly imposed upon, and yet he has done excellent service in preparing the minds of men and women, against all kinds of ridicule, for the reception of higher truth. Lady Augusta, again, is a fervent believer, and yet is not a medium. But she too has done good service by her unwavering faith: and she has social position which has also proved and will continue to prove useful. Miss Brudenel is not a believer, though as yet she has not ventured to confess her infidelity.

The *rôle* of Vestal imposed upon her by her father will never be played by her, nor will she ever become an oracle. Your cousin, Miss Cicely Langston, deplores continually the loss of her brother who is not dead. He went away from home, giving up his title and his fortune, five or six years ago, intending to take up his lot with the common people; and he has never since made any sign of life. You are the heir of his property and of the baronetcy if he is dead. But I think you will not succeed yet, because he will return. I shall take his sister to him unless he comes to her.'

'Where is he then? And when will he return?'

'He is on board a sailing ship bound from London to Quebec. I shall be told in good time when he returns. Why should I trouble to find out things when my Friends tell me what is wanted? As for you, your fortune will be given to you by your guardian, Mr. Brudenel, in about a month's time, when you arrive at your twenty-fourth birthday—ex-

actly on the same day your cousin will be twenty-one and will receive her fortune. You have a mechanical turn, and you occupy your time when you are not in the Physical Laboratory in making those pretty little ingenuities in brass which I see on the table there. I confess that I know nothing about them. Have I told you enough?’

‘You undoubtedly know a great deal. But you might have learned all that by inquiry. My people are not quite unknown.’

‘Then I will tell you more about yourself. You have been touched by the prevalent Socialist ideas, like your cousin, Sir Percival; you think that every man ought to live by the work of his own hands.’

‘Yes,’ said Tom, now really surprised. ‘I think it is for most men the greatest misfortune in the world to be born rich.’

‘You would not think so, perhaps, if you had been born poor. You think, besides, and you have constantly asserted your belief, that we are on the eve of the greatest Revolution—

a universal Revolution—that the world has ever seen.’

‘I do. How do you know that?’

‘You are right, and yet the Revolution will not be what you think. Yes,’ his eyes lit up and his whole face smiled, ‘it will be the greatest Revolution that the world has ever seen. A Revolution in everything, the rich will become poor, yet not as you think, and the prizes will once more fall to the strongest hand, yet not as you think. You believe this, and you have said it more than once among your friends.’

‘I have. How do you know it?’

‘Certainly I have never talked with any of your friends. How did I know it? By mesmerism? How did I learn the facts about your family? By mesmerism? How did I learn the existence of your cousin? Was it all by mesmerism?’

He threw away the end of his cigarette and walked over to the table where lay cogs and wheels all in shiny brass of some curious and beautiful machine which Tom was making.

‘I understand nothing, for my part, about machinery. Wheels and mechanical contrivances of all kinds bewilder me. I cannot even try to understand how cogs and springs produce effects so marvellous. Yet I give you credit when you tell me there is use in machinery, and that you understand its laws and can make it your servant.’

Tom laughed.

‘You have me there. You mean that I should give you credit for understanding something that I cannot.’

The Philosopher looked him straight and full with the eyes of an honest man.

‘That is precisely what I mean.’

‘It’s half-past twelve,’ said Tom, looking at his watch. ‘See now—are you going to stay long in this house?’

‘I think a month or two. Perhaps more. There is talk of a great Conference.’

‘And will there be much hanky-panky?’

‘Perhaps a great deal.’

‘Old Chick, before he took to drinking, used to fill the place with spirits. They were

the very worst kind of spirits you ever saw. And they talked the very worst kind of drivel. They did, upon my honour. If you knew what a lot of humbugs and impostors my uncle has been harbouring and encouraging—if he found one out, it was only to welcome another—you would not be surprised at my distrust.'

'I am not in the least surprised. When I meet with persons like Mr. Emanuel Chick I am surprised at the strength of the cause, since it survives even him.'

'That's all right, then. Don't play more than you can upon the women's feelings. But if you really bring back my cousin—poor old Percy—I'll forgive you everything. And—and'—Tom said this very unwillingly—'you are not like the ordinary run of 'em; your voice rings true: and—well—look here, now, we'll be friends, unless I find you out. Mind, I shall always be on the look out for you.'

The Messenger laughed pleasantly.

'I tell you how I work, but you do not believe me. It is through my Friends beyond

the seas. We shall be friends, then, until you find me out. Give me your hand. Now, since you will never find me out, we are friends for life.'

Ten minutes later Tom laid himself between the sheets in the room adjoining his study. He was a young man absolutely without the least sense of the supernatural: he never felt the air around him grow still and his heart tremble with the vague terrors which assail some men even in places and at times when they least expect to feel that phantoms of the outer world are around them. He would have slept in a charnel-house surrounded by skulls and skeletons without a tremor: all the associations possible of murder, cruelty, and guilt and remorse would have failed to move him. Therefore, when just as he was dropping off to sleep he heard strange music over his head, seemingly in the room, he was not terrified at all, but only startled. He sprang out of bed swiftly, locked the door, and took out the key. Then he struck a light. There was no one in the room and the music ceased.

He blew out the candle and got into bed again. Then the music began once more.

‘It’s deuced clever,’ said Tom. ‘For a trick, it’s as good as anything I ever saw, and it seems a pretty kind of tune—soft and melting—twice as good as old Chick’s accordion. Well, if his Friends mean to be polite they haven’t been long in making up their minds. Very pretty indeed it is. Very pretty. I take it kind of them.’

Then he fell asleep, and I have never heard how much longer the supernatural music was continued.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUBMISSION OF THE LEADER.

AFTER breakfast—always, in this house, a hushed and solemn function—Mr. Brudenel led the way to his study. He was more than commonly ponderous this morning, and more than commonly nervous. The events of the preceding night would have filled him with delight but for that unfortunate revelation about the novel. It has been often proved that the gravest and most reverend of men have been, in their lifetime, devourers of novels, but it is disconcerting when a revered Leader is charged with spending the time, supposed sacred to the study of Magic and Mystery, in reading Ouida. Moreover, it was a true charge, and since Herr Paulus could only have known its truth by super-

natural powers, the charge must have been brought forward either as a rebuke or as a threat. If a rebuke it was presumptuous to the last degree in so young a man, and if a threat—how much did the young man know?

‘This is—ah!—my small library, Herr Paulus,’ he said, pointing with proud humility to the shelves filled from top to bottom with works on the subject to which his life had been given. ‘You will—ah!—have my full permission to make any use you please of this small collection. Here you will find, I think, all the Masters in the art, Cornelius Agrippa, Barrett’s “Celestial Intelligence,” the Romance of the Rose, Eliphaz, Lilly and Dee, Manetho’s Fragments, Salverte’s “Science Occulte,” Naudé’s “Apologie,” the recent works of Blavatzky, Olcott, and Sinnett.’ He stopped short in his communication because he perceived that the young man was looking at him and not at the books. ‘Perhaps,’ he said, coldly, ‘you already know the contents of these books.’

‘On the contrary,’ said Herr Paulus.

‘Outside certain lines I am a most ignorant person. I have, it is true, studied Solomon’s Book of Wisdom, but these works of mediæval and oriental pretenders I have not taken the trouble even to look into. Only it amuses me that you, the Leader of Spiritualism in the country, should seriously invite an inspection of these writers.’

‘Yet the results of mediæval research——’

‘There were no results.’ The young man spoke with a dogmatism which would have been offensive but for the calm assurance of his manner. ‘There never were any results. The books are absolutely without value.’

Mr. Brudenel put up his eyeglasses and looked at the books on which he had spent so many hundreds of pounds. Would no spirit issue forth to contradict this arrogant young man?

‘No—no results? No value?’

‘Well, there is the value of history. These men, provided with a fragment of truth, groped about in the dark and found nothing. The books preserve the history of their

researches. If that is valuable the books are valuable. If not'—he shrugged his shoulders.

'Have you read them?'

'Not one.'

'How, then, do you know?'

'I know because I know. It is part of the Wisdom of the Ancient Way to distinguish between truth and falsehood. How many of them have you read yourself, Mr. Brudenel? You do not reply. I will tell you. Not one. You have turned over pages which you could not understand. You have not read one. Burn your library, Mr. Brudenel. Burn it all.'

'Burn my unrivalled collection? Sir, you presume too far. I would have you to know——'

'You have not read one single book, Mr. Brudenel. You know nothing of the subject. Here is a book which professes to show you how to raise spirits.' He took a volume from the shelves. 'Do you know the method? Have you ever tried to raise a spirit? Here is another book which teaches you how to find the Philosopher's Stone. Have you

found it? Here are the secrets of astrology. Can you cast a nativity?’

‘But—but—do you pretend that the claims of all the mediæval philosophers have been baseless?’

‘Not quite baseless. In the same way the modern so-called Occult Philosophers and Esoteric Buddhists are not baseless. Their pretensions rest on the fragments which were brought to the East from Syria. So the pretensions of the mediæval Seekers rest upon the fragments preserved by the learned Jews of Spain and Morocco, and handed down from father to son. But in Abyssinia we have the perfect Book, the King’s own Book, brought to us by Prince Menelek.’

‘It is something to be told that we have fragments,’ said Mr. Brudenel, coldly.

‘Yes: you have fragments. They have enabled you to get a little way, but you can go no farther. Consider! You have been a Seeker for thirty years, and what do you know now, more than you knew when first you began?’

‘There are some who think we have made great advances.’

‘You have made no advance at all,’ said Herr Paulus firmly; ‘and if you continue in your present line you will make no further advance.’

‘After all,’ the Leader objected, but without much force, ‘one cannot overthrow the fabric of thirty years on the dictum of a strange youth.’

‘Fabric!’ Herr Paulus drew himself up and assumed the aspect of one who teaches and admonishes. ‘Fabric! What fabric? You have none. You have not even the dream, the simulacrum, the deceptive image of a Fabric. In your thoughts at this moment I read the secret consciousness of failure. Confess! Failure. Your whole life has been a failure. You have been buoyed up by false hopes; you have trusted in one impostor after the other. Deceptions have met you at every turn. Confess. Your whole life has been a failure. You have nothing solid—nothing—nothing. Confess.’

His dark eyes flashed, his accent was stern, his forefinger was menacing. Heard one ever before of a Leader thus rebuked? His aspect was severe. Mr. Brudenel turned away as if afraid to meet those eyes, and hung his head and stammered something about the Joy of Research. But it was very feeble.

‘Your life has been a failure, and you know it and feel it. Confess. Look in my face—look at me. So.’ Mr. Brudenel obeyed slowly and unwillingly, as if he was compelled. He raised his eyes and met the steady, fervent gaze of the masterful young man. ‘Confess all that is in your mind.’

Mr. Brudenel sunk into a chair. All his dignity was gone and his stiffening. He collapsed. And still his eyes were fixed and held by those of his guest.

‘I do confess,’ he said. ‘My life has been a failure. For long years I have known it, but I was ashamed to acknowledge it. And I was surrounded by believers who looked up to me. Had I confessed the truth, it would have been a dreadful blow to my wife and to

everybody. Every year I have felt it more and more. I have lost my self-respect. I have been a wretched humbug, pretending to believe. I have come here, every morning, pretending to study, but in reality to read novels and to forget the cant of the Spiritualists.'

'It is enough. Say no more. Own, however, that I read your thoughts rightly.'

Mr. Brudenel, the power of those eyes removed, began to recover a little. He sat up in his chair and put up his glasses.

'I have told you, Herr Paulus,' he said, 'what I never thought to tell any man. You have the secret of my life. Respect it, sir.'

'Indeed, Mr. Brudenel, I had the secret of your life before. Do not doubt that I shall respect it.'

'I am glad to have told you. Now you know all, and there is no longer any occasion for us two to talk about the phenomena. Perhaps, some day, you will tell me how you did the things last night. I seem to know

how most of them do their tricks, but yours, I confess——’

‘You are terribly wrong—most terribly wrong, Mr. Brudenel. If I have been sent to you in your hour of deepest dejection it was not only to tell you that your efforts have been unavailing, nor was it to perform tricks.’

‘The time was,’ the Leader continued, without listening to this interruption, ‘when I rejoiced in my researches, and looked joyfully forward to the fuller light which was certain to come. Alas! that time has now gone, and I have nothing but regrets that I have thrown away my life among enthusiasts and common cheats. I confessed to you, Herr Paulus, because—you are young, but you seem honest—because you compelled me. That is done. Go on and frighten the women, and come here when you please to laugh at the whole business with me.’

‘Again, it is not my object to frighten the women and to laugh with you. Your past life is done with. But a new life begins if you wish for some splendid——’

‘Oh! how am I to trust any one?’ cried Mr. Brudenel, helplessly. ‘I want no new life, man. Henceforth I will go on like the rest of mankind. I shall cease to inquire into the other world. I shall go to Church with my wife and the girls. No new splendours for me, thank you. I have done with it all.’

He threw out his arms with an expressive gesture.

‘Done with it, Herr Paulus. Done with it, I say.’

‘Permit me, Mr. Brudenel. I read in your looks—nay in your mind—I read your dejection last night. You expected nothing but to be bored. Then you were surprised out of yourself. Then you expressed what you felt at the moment; but this morning another cold wave of doubt has fallen upon your soul. You no longer trust your eyes.’

‘That is so.’

‘The credentials which I exhibited have satisfied the rest of those who saw them—except your ward and—and perhaps one other. But you, rendered suspicious by fre-

quent disappointments, recall them with doubt and questioning. The music in the air: the silver bells—you have heard something like them before in the darkened séance: they were produced by your Chicks and your Medlocks, with their concertinas: girls in a trance have been seen before: clairvoyance is no new thing; perhaps the picture of the very scenes which had passed through the girls' minds—which they actually saw—is an old trick too.'

'No—no—I do not say so. The things were new and striking.'

'Very good. Now, Mr. Brudenel, I am sent to you especially. It is to you that my message is given. If you are not convinced I will show you more credentials. What do you ask? Do not be afraid. Ask boldly.'

'Do for me,' said Mr. Brudenel, 'what the Occult Philosophers have not done. Put in my hands an Indian newspaper of this very day.'

'That is very easy,' replied Herr Paulus. He put his hand in his coat pocket and pro-

duced a paper stamped by an Indian postmark, addressed to Cyril Brudenel. 'Here it is. Here is the *Friend of India* of this morning. Before you open it I must make a condition. There are in the paper all kinds of news—political—social—deaths—marriages—share markets—things not thought worthy of the telegraph—which *must* not be read before the day when in the ordinary course the paper would arrive. Open this paper. Satisfy yourself that it is the paper of this very day, which will arrive in London this day four weeks: then lock it up in some place accessible only to yourself, and do not look at it again until the day when all the world can see it. Do you promise this?'

'I would rather have its contents published to all the world.'

'Consider. There may be things in it which it will be best to be learned at their proper time. To publish the paper may cause the ruin of merchants. Do you promise?'

'I promise.'

‘Then open the paper.’

Mr Brudenel tore open the cover, which Herr Paulus tossed into the fire. He looked at the date. Saturday, March 26th, 1887. The date was printed on the front and on every page. He folded it up again with a deep sigh.

‘You have actually done this wonderful thing,’ he said.

‘Lock up the paper in the safe. So. That drawer will do. Lock the drawer and put the key on your ring. No one has access to the safe but yourself, of course. You will get the paper out and read it on the day when it is due by the mail, and not before. No one but yourself will know until then of its existence. Remember, you are not to look at the paper or to open the drawer until the time comes.’

Mr. Brudenel did as he was told.

‘And now sit down and let us talk.’

It was then eleven o’clock.

At half-past one Herr Paulus and Mr. Brudenel came to luncheon

The ladies became instantly aware that something had happened. I mean, of course, something important. Mr. Brudenel plainly showed that something had happened to him. In that house they were always expecting something out of the common, and last night's events had shown that they were on the eve of something very great indeed. Therefore Lady Augusta's heart beat faster when she saw that her husband had things to communicate.

‘My dear,’ he whispered, just before they sat down, ‘the most wonderful, the most stupendous manifestations have occurred. I will tell you about them after luncheon.’

‘Were they—were they—of the nature of last night's appearances?’

‘No, no; quite different. Herr Paulus has done for me alone what the Occult Philosophers have never been able to do; and I have been translated in the spirit to Abyssinia. I have spent two hours—it seemed to me to be five-and-twenty—on a hill side with the sole living possessor of the Wisdom which

Herr Paulus calls the Ancient Way. Augusta, we shall not only be the happiest people in the world, but we shall also be the most powerful and the most celebrated. Be very, very kind to him, Augusta. We are on SOLID ROCK at last—at last—on SOLID ROCK!’

At luncheon Mr. Brudenel could eat nothing, being still under the influence of the morning’s mystery. His cheek was flushed, his eyes were humid: the eager, nervous look was changed for one of satisfied assurance: his voice was soft. Some great change had passed over his spirits.

As for Herr Paulus he attacked the luncheon with the appetite of four-and-twenty, and as if there were no dinner ahead. But the girls, Cicely and Hetty, waited for further information; and Sibyl looked suspicious.

In the afternoon Mr. Brudenel, worn out, perhaps, by the exertions of the morning, fell fast asleep in his study.

He slept from two o’clock until half-past four, in the deep and comfortable chair by the fireside in which he was wont to read

Ouida while they thought he was pursuing Cabalistic or other research. At half-past four he awoke with a violent start, springing to his feet.

‘Good heavens!’ he said, ‘was it only a dream?’

He rushed to his safe, unlocked it and opened the drawer where he had laid the paper—the *Friend of India* of that morning, brought all the way to England in an hour or two by Herr Paulus’s friends.

He had laid the paper in the drawer. He was certain he had, there could be no doubt in his mind about it.

But the paper was gone! There was not a trace of the paper left. Stay, at his feet was a scrap of the paper which had wrapped it, with a piece of his name, ‘—el, Esq.,’ and a corner of the Indian stamp. It was no dream, and then he remembered his promise that he would not open the drawer until the time came. He had broken the promise and lost the paper. Good Heavens! he had actually fooled away the most stupendous of

modern miracles by curiosity unworthy of a school girl! The paper was gone. He had held in his hands that very morning a paper brought all the way from India since day-break. And it was gone! What a miracle! What a misfortune!

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONQUEST OF THE HAREM.

‘WE spoke yesterday of the Ancient Way,’ said Herr Paulus. ‘Perhaps you would like to hear something more definite.’

It was the afternoon of the same day, about half-past five. Tea was going on, and there were present only the ladies of the house, with Hetty Medlock. The twilight was falling, but the lamps were not yet lit nor the curtains drawn.

‘The son of King Solomon and Queen Sheba,’ he began——

‘What?’ Lady Augusta was not often surprised, but this beginning startled her.

‘The son of King Solomon and Queen Sheba,’ Herr Paulus repeated, ‘was, as every Abyssinian knows, the Prince Menelek. He was born in the Queen’s capital, and was

brought up in his native country. It is said that it was his mother's sole delight and solace, as soon as the boy could understand anything, to fill his mind with stories of the greatness and glory of his father, the Wise King of Syria. When he grew to manhood he resolved to visit the city where his father had been King, and with a great retinue he set off. His route has been preserved, with many details, which are curious, but you would not care for them. He went down the Nile as far as the site of the modern Cairo, and then journeyed through the desert by the Serbonian Lake and the River of Egypt to El Arish, Gaza, and Joppa, whence he journeyed to the Holy City.

‘He entered the gates of Jerusalem at break of day. He had not gone far when the people began flocking round him, the old men weeping, the women crying for joy, and the young men shouting. For his resemblance to Solomon was so great that they thought the old King had come back again to them with renewed youth.’

‘No part of this story,’ Sibyl interposed, severely, ‘is in the——’

‘My dear!’ said Lady Augusta, ‘we have here, perhaps, a contemporary Chronicle.’

‘The tumult,’ Herr Paulus continued, ‘was heard in the Palace where the King was sitting with his Council. They heard the people cry “King Solomon has come back again. May the King live for ever!” and sent a messenger to learn the cause. At first it was proposed to send soldiers to kill the man who presumed to be so much like the dead King; but it was finally agreed to bring him before the King, and to question him. Now, when he stood before the King, those who were old cried aloud, like the people in the streets, for astonishment, because it seemed to them that it was Solomon himself in the beauty and strength of his youth, who stood before them. But the young man bore himself modestly, and made obeisance to the King, and when he had caused presents to be brought, he asked leave to speak, and said:—
“O King, I am Menelek, the son of Solomon

the Great and Queen Sheba of Abyssinia, from which country have I come, bringing gifts to thee, and desirous of seeing the great and glorious Temple which the King my father caused to be built, and his Palace and all his glory, and then to return in peace into mine own country, if it please the King to suffer me to depart."

'And it was done as he asked, and the King entertained him courteously, and all his following, for thirty days. And at the end of that time Prince Menelek would depart. Therefore, the King ordered all manner of precious things to be given to him, in order to show his friendship and goodwill toward his brother, and among the gifts thus prepared was a copy, so exact that you could not tell that it was not the original, of the Ark which is in the Temple, and it contained exact copies of all that was in the Ark. And here, the Abyssinians say, a strange thing happened, for there was in the Temple a priest named Isaac, a man stricken in years but full of learning, one who knew the Hidden Way. The

priest, by much conversation with Menelek, fell into so great an affection for the young man that nothing would do but he must go back to Abyssinia with him, he and all his house. Nay, so greatly did he love him, partly because he was the son of Solomon, his master, and partly because he was a goodly youth, and one who loved to talk of things hidden from the multitude, that he did a strange and wonderful thing, of which the Jews to this day are ignorant. For, by the power of the Hidden Way, he threw a charm over the watchers and guardians of the Temple, so that they slept, or rather so that they saw, but saw not, and in the morning had forgotten, for they walked to and fro in their watch as if they were awake, and challenged each other and called the dawn, and sang the morning Psalms, while with his sons this old priest brought into the Temple the imitation of the Sacred Ark and exchanged it, taking away with him the real Ark and leaving in its place that which had been made for Menelek. And this, they say, would have

been impossible in the lifetime of the King, partly because his servants, the Jinns, who day and night worked for him in and about the Temple, would have prevented it, and partly because the Shechinah above the Ark, which left it when Solomon died, would have blinded those who touched it. They brought away the Ark, therefore, with the tables of stone, and laid it on a camel, covered with a carpet, and led it away with Menelek and his train when he left Jerusalem. And the old priest took with him secretly the Book of the Wisdom of the Great King, the loss of which was never suffered to be known unto the people unto this day; and many of the Jews went with him because they would rather serve Menelek than Rehoboam; and their descendants, who are now called Falashas, remain in the land of Abyssinia to this day, worshipping after the manner of their ancestors. And to this day the Ark itself is in the hands of the Abyssinian King. And the Book of Wisdom, by some called the Book of the Hidden Way, and by others the Book of

the Ancient Way, is in the hands of that priest's descendants to this day. This Book is our Book : this Wisdom is our Wisdom : the descendant of the priest, Isaac, is my master, Isák the Falasha, called Isák Ibn Menelek : and the Ancient Way is the Wisdom of King Solomon himself.'

There were four women listening to this story. Three of them, like Queen Dido, listened with eager eyes and beating hearts. To them already this young man was an infallible Prophet, before whom they were contented to surrender whatever of judgment, reason, and critical faculty they possessed. Is it wicked—I mean in the modern sense—to advance the doctrine that most women are entirely devoid of the critical faculty? Less than four-and-twenty hours had sufficed to make this young man the master of these three women. That he had not also become the master of the fourth was solely due to the extraordinary dislike with which this girl regarded all pretenders to supernatural powers, so that at the very aspect and first appear-

ance of one she hardened her heart and stiffened her soul. But with regard to the others Herr Paulus came and conquered. His victory was due to his appearance and his manners almost as much as to the exhibition of his powers. If he had been the tobacco-reeking German they expected, badly dressed and badly-mannered, uncouth and vulgar, his powers would have been acknowledged, but there would have been no enthusiasm for him.

‘It was from Isák,’ Herr Paulus continued, ‘that I learned all I know. It is he who continues to teach me. I am in conversation with him every moment; even now, while I am speaking, I am receiving messages of instruction and support.’

‘Oh! it is wonderful!’ Cicely murmured. ‘And I have seen my brother!’

Sibyl looked furtively at the man who dared to talk like this. Many men had come to that house and talked. Many pretentious assertions had been made; in every one she had recognised some old familiar stroke, some

familiar stage business, and in every one there was at bottom the commercial element. Here the language and the pretensions were equally new to her, and the commercial element was—so far—wholly wanting. She hardened her heart with resolution and looked at him again. His eyes met hers with a strangely searching and commanding look. Then a sensation fell upon her: one quite new and terrifying: she felt her brain overshadowed as by a cloud: she was drawn towards this man as by a rope: it was by a desperate effort that she seemed to snap that rope and to drive away the cloud from her brain. Again she met his eyes, and this time he turned away.

‘There are many women,’ he said, ‘as there are many men, who cannot, if they would, tread this path. There are others—a few—who have the gifts but refuse to use them.’

‘They know, while they are free,’ said Sibyl, ‘what they are and what they do. They know not what may happen to them

when they have surrendered their freedom and their will.'

'Oh!' murmured Lady Augusta, setting the worst possible example, 'when a Prophet leads, who would not follow and surrender all?'

Cicely and Hetty sighed, and the latter blushed a rosy red, as if there were too much happiness only in the thought of perfect slavery and submission.

Only four-and-twenty hours since he arrived. To be sure he had lost no time, nor did he fool around: but by methods known only to himself he dominated those three women and made them all his slaves. What he had said to each separately I know not. But now they were his.

'It is wonderful,' said Cicely again, to whom new worlds were opening. 'It is truly wonderful!'

'I was selected—I know not why—nor where—for the work by Isák himself.'

'Were you taken in infancy?' asked Lady Augusta.

‘No,’ he laughed gently. ‘I am going to tax your credulity to the utmost.’

‘Oh! after last night is there anything which we would not believe?’

‘Thank you, Lady Augusta. It was for you and for this house that the manifestations of last night were granted. In themselves they were trifles light as air; but they served for credentials. You will believe me, therefore, when I tell you that the earliest thing I remember is when I was seventeen years old. As for my previous life, where it was spent, what was my name, who were my parents, what was my country, I cannot tell you. Isák called me Paul. I could not speak a word of the language at first.’

‘What is their language?’

‘The Falashes preserve the knowledge of Hebrew; but among themselves they speak Amharic. My education was in that language. But, to us, all languages are alike. When we find ourselves in a foreign country we speak its language.’

‘Anna Petrovna says that you speak Russian like a native.’

‘While in Russia I did, no doubt. If you asked me for a Russian sentence now I suppose I could not give you one. But there is one thing which makes me think that English is my native language. It is that I am sometimes taken for an American. This seems to me to show that my childhood may have been passed in the United States, and that when I speak English I return to the tongue of my forgotten years.’

‘It is possible,’ said Lady Augusta thoughtfully, as if she had heard of many similar cases. ‘But how long ago is it since you found yourself in Abyssinia?’

‘Again, I do not know. There are cases in which a man may spend his whole life upon the study and never advance beyond the gates of the Ancient Way. There are other cases in which a man may develop the highest powers in a year or two. There are other cases in which a man can never acquire anything, however long he may study. It is

with mankind, as regards the Ancient Way, just as in the Heaven revealed to the Swede, in which the spirits find their levels, and some are contented to remain for ever in the lower levels, while others are continually rising to higher planes. I do not know how long I have studied, but I think I am still a young man. There is no reason why we should interfere with the course of nature, in which age and decay of the body are but incidents in the long eternal life. The men lose for a while their strength of body and of mind: the women their beauty. It is but an incident, strength and beauty will return again, and the onward march to Wisdom will be renewed with greater joy.'

'Do women walk alone upon that road?'

Herr Paulus hesitated.

'It is the modern fashion,' he said, 'for women to claim independence and equality. But in the Ancient Way they do not walk alone. We will talk of this further: at present you will perhaps be content to walk with me.'

Lady Augusta looked as if she would have liked to inquire further into this interesting topic, but she reserved it for a more fitting time—when the three girls would not be with them.

‘I will lead you,’ he went on, ‘until you are so far advanced as to choose another leader. You will then know all who are on the Ancient Way, whether living or dead. As for myself, it will not be long, perhaps, before I shall be recalled to the quiet joys of study and meditation among the Abyssinian mountains.’

‘But there is the glory of the missionary,’ said Lady Augusta. ‘You must not forget that.’

Herr Paulus turned his sad but not reproachful eyes upon her.

‘You speak out of your ignorance,’ he said, ‘else you would know that with us there are no such words as glory or honour. What is it to be well or ill spoken of by men? We are taught to despise all earthly shows; titles, rank, honour, wealth, have no meaning

for us. These things do not advance us upon the Way. I came reluctantly because I was enjoined to come. I shall stay with less reluctance, because I have met with a reception so warm and hearts so sympathetic.'

'Yes—yes,' Lady Augusta murmured, giving him her hand, 'you must stay with us a long while. We have so much to learn: we are so ignorant: we are as yet hardly on the threshold. Oh! you must stay with us a long while, Herr Paulus.'

'Make my name English,' he said. 'Call me Paul. And you, my sisters, I will call by your own names too.'

Sibyl shook her head.

'You will except me, if you please,' she said.

'Sibyl!' It was Cicely who expostulated.

'Be it so,' said Paul, with a sigh. 'In everything human there is the touch of discord—one wonders why.'

'Promise to stay with us,' Lady Augusta urged. 'Stay with us, Paul—Paul, our Master.'

‘Stay with us!’ said Cicely.

‘Stay with us!’ murmured Hetty.

‘Yes—I will stay until——’—his eyes met the gaze of Hetty, whose eyes were fixed upon him as those of a nymph of Delos might have been fixed on Apollo, had that god vouchsafed to appear to her, with as much awe, respect, and submission.

‘I will stay,’ he corrected himself, ‘a long while. I will stay—until you yourselves order me to depart.’

‘Paul!’ said Lady Augusta, clasping her hands, do you know—do you understand what you have promised?’

‘Yes,’ he repeated firmly, but looking at Hetty. ‘I will stay until you yourselves order me to depart.’

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE STUDIO.

Two girls were talking together in a studio.

It was not a very magnificent studio, such as one may visit in Fitz John's Avenue or in St. John's Wood on Roving Sunday. There were no pieces of tapestry, no bits of armour, no mediæval weapons, no galleries and stairs of carved wood ; not at all ; it was a simple room built out at the side of the house ; not originally intended for a studio, but yet serving very well for one. The house to which it belonged was an old-fashioned, square, red-brick house, still surrounded by a bit of its old garden, which had been extensive, and could still show apple and pear trees ; and

still had some of the old red-brick wall standing at the end of it, moss and lichen covered, crowned with wallflowers. The studio served at the same time for a keeping room. But it was a studio first. There was an easel at which one of the girls was standing; on a table beside it were the usual implements of the craft: a quantity of drawings and sketches and half-finished things were pinned against the wall and lay piled upon the chairs and even stacked upon the floor. A lay figure—nothing so horribly human as a lay figure or so piteous and ghostly in its silence and the horror of its helplessness—stood in a corner, its head serving as a peg for a bonnet, while its arms carried stiffly, as under protest, a jacket and a silk handkerchief and a veil. On the residential side, so to speak, of the furniture, there were a few chairs, a shabby, worn carpet, a small round table, and a hard, black sofa. But the hardness of the sofa was mitigated by soft and pretty wraps, shawls, and woollen things which made it look Oriental and splendid, and the shabby carpet was

hidden by rugs, while the general poverty of the room, whose paper and paint had not been renewed for many years, was redeemed by the pretty things hanging from the wall or standing on the mantelshelf. And there was everywhere such a heavenly litter as proved that the occupant could never have belonged to a large family of girls, all living in the same room, and therefore taught as girls in a large family must be taught that real religion is always proved by tidiness. The occupant was clearly a girl, apart from the evidence of the young lady at the easel—gloves and a veil lay on the table, and there was a feminine atmosphere in the room. She was also a girl, one could perceive, who read a good deal, for the sofa was piled with books, and there were hanging shelves also filled with books and magazines. Most of the books belonged to the dear, delightful, much-abused tribe of novels. The room, in fact, made a comfortable keeping-room large enough to walk about in and to hold plenty of things and to contain quite an extensive litter; it did very well also

for a studio, with a strong light in the proper quarter, but it had been built for a very different purpose. In the house adjoining, Mrs. Lavinia Medlock in the old days when she was more than illustrious—everybody can be illustrious, but not everybody can be fashionable—held every day her now historical séances. Those days are gone—this is not wonderful because all old days are gone—and with them is gone Lavinia's greatness. She then wore the finest and newest of satin dresses and received the best of company. Her friends came all day long, they came in omnibuses, in cabs, in broughams, and in stately chariots, they had all kinds of titles to their names from plain Miss or Mistress, to Gracious Duchess and even Serene Highness ; they came by appointment and without, they would not be denied, and because the drawing-room was not large enough—it had been formerly the front parlour—Lavinia built a salon at the side of the house for the reception of her friends, those in the flesh, and those out of it. The former, who concealed as much of the flesh

as they could in furs, jackets, cloaks and other things so as not to make the spirits jealous by the show of what they themselves lacked, were not attracted to the house by Lavinia's appearance, which was homely, nor by her conversation, which was plain, nor by her manners, which spoke of certain omissions in early training, but by the reputation she possessed of being the finest interpreter in the world of things said and done out of it, and the most favourite Medium known to the spirits. Certain it is that you could, by Lavinia's help, converse with any spirit you chose to call. So affable and condescending were they, or so powerful was the influence of Lavinia, that the most illustrious spirit possible to name would come if invited, and converse with the most obscure, and answer any question, even the most impertinent, as to their own happiness or the happiness of their friends. The immortal Homer, the equally immortal Bard of Avon, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, Milton himself, or Charles the First, would not disdain to rap out a mes-

sage, dictate a poem, or show personal acquaintance with the inquirer's great-aunt. Oh ! these are old stories, but I am talking of old days : yet they are but as the day before yesterday. Do we not remember how scoffers used to call attention to the fact that our knowledge of the other world was never advanced an inch, and that the messages were idle trash ? Do we not remember how the spirits were proved to have told the most barefaced lies, and to have perpetrated the most astounding blunders ? Do we not remember how Lavinia herself was shown up in scientific journals for having caused to speak one spirit of a living person and another of a person who had never lived ? Nay, we may remember more than this. For it is on record that none of these exposures and attacks seemed to injure Lavinia until a fatal thing happened to her. She ceased to be the fashion. She drew no longer : she excited no more curiosity. As for the credulity of people, that can never be exhausted, and any man among you, my brothers, who desires to get notoriety and to

live in clover, has only to pretend to do what he cannot do, and to be what he is not, in order to gain his desire for a while. Lavinia ceased to be talked about. Then the people all went off to the next show and deserted her, and she began to fall into poverty. All that she had in the world was this house, which she had fortunately bought during the time of fatness, and a small and yearly diminishing *clientèle* of those who still believed in her, just as they would have believed in Joanna Southcote, and employed her, as they would have employed a wise woman, and inquired of the oracle, after the fashion of the ancients, in the conduct of their affairs.

She now received this scanty remnant in the old 'front parlour,' and let the studio and a bedroom to an artist when she could find a lodger. Her present lodger was an American girl, who lived alone and travelled alone, with more than the average independence of her country. She had lived thus alone in Rome and in Florence, and was now working at her profession alone in London. But she was

a girl who made many friends, and was never really alone.

The clause in the Creed of women which says, 'We believe that it is impossible for a girl to live alone,' has been of late years so much questioned and attacked that some think it will have to be struck out of the creed altogether, in which case, asks the Conservative, what will become of the rest of that Sacred and Ark-like monument? In fact, women who work for their living have long since discovered that it is a clause which has no foundation in the Eternal Verities, because in every town there are girls who must live alone. In London there are thousands; they live with each other, sharing rooms; they live in the places where they work; they live in boarding houses. When they are rich enough they live, as this young lady lived, in their own lodgings, with a sitting room as well as a bedroom, and in a solitude which is pleasing after the work of the day. Thousands and thousands of girls in this city, not work girls, like certain poor friends of ours,

but girls of respectable parents and responsible brothers, whose self-respect is as great as that of any young lady who lives at home. They are artists of all kinds, musicians, singers, governesses of every degree, writers, chiefly of small fiction, reviewers and journalists, shop girls, sales-women, copyists, translators, type-writers—I say nothing about actresses, because they have long since flung the Women's Creed to the winds—women of all professions and trades. They live alone: they have the latchkey: they go where they will: they ask for and they need no protection: they are not in the least afraid.

As for one of these girls, the slighter of the two, the girl with the light brown hair and the hazel eyes, you have seen her before when she was painting in an American garden, and talking to a poetic youth. This is Bethiah Ruysdael, who is mostly known to her friends as Kitty, I believe because she thinks Kitty prettier than Bethiah, as it is, perhaps, though not so uncommon. The other girl, the girl with the great black limpid eyes, and the

pale cheek and full figure, is the daughter of Lavinia the Great—Hetty Medlock. She had been standing for a model, a kerchief tied about her head, and the early spring sunshine fell through the window and painted her face through the crimson silk, and made her cheek glow and her eyes burn like coals. She was standing for a Neapolitan, I believe ; or perhaps it was a Bohemian, or an Irish peasant, or indeed an Andalusian or a Catalonian. But, in reality, the picture came out a very fine likeness of Hetty, and a very beautiful portrait it was, though the painting had faults of colour. The carnations, some said, were brutal. The light some said—but what matter what they said?

‘Now, Hetty dear,’ said the American girl, ‘you must be tired. Take a rest.’

Hetty threw off the handkerchief and came round to the easel to look at the picture.

‘Kitty,’ she said, ‘it is beautiful.’

‘You like it, really? Yes. I do think it is pretty good. How glad I am that I painted out the first hideous thing!’

‘Yes. But it was like, too.’

‘Oh! like——’ the artist repeated, impatiently. ‘I dare say it was like—— But you were dull and downcast, Hetty. And now you have changed. It seems to me as if another look altogether had come into your face since I began to paint you a month ago. You are ten times as lovely, Hetty.’

Hetty blushed. Another look, she knew, had come into her face.

‘I suppose,’ she said, still blushing, ‘it is because we have all become so much happier.’

‘Oh! You mean the German person who pretends.’

‘Don’t, Kitty. Oh! You don’t know what he has done.’

‘Why, dear, he is only a——’

‘No, Kitty, he is more—far more than that. It is no common spiritualism. The most wonderful things happen every day. He takes Mr. Brudenel into far-off countries——’

‘Hetty!’

‘And he teaches Lady Augusta the most wonderful things, and he talks to Cicely and to me as nobody, I am sure, ever talked before.’

‘Oh, but Hetty——’

‘He is not at all a solemn person, with airs and pretences; but just a young man full of life and spirits. Even Tom and Sibyl, who will not confess that they believe in him, like him. The house is so lively that you would not know it again. We talk and laugh at dinner. Mr. Brudenel is no longer pompous, and Lady Augusta laughs with us. And there is no more question at all about conversing with spirits. Paul says that we may converse with as many as we like, but that on the lower plane they will only mock at us and deceive us. When we reach the higher plane we are to be brought face to face with the spirits who cannot lie.’

‘Hetty, do you believe all this?’

‘Kitty,’ the girl dropped her voice to a whisper; ‘I declare that if there is anybody in the world who ought to hate spiritualism

it is myself. Oh! I cannot tell you all. It has ruined my mother and driven away my father, and made my name a by-word. Oh! one day last winter somebody read aloud in my presence Browning's 'Sludge the Medium,' and I prayed that the earth would open and swallow me. But even I cannot doubt any longer the power that Herr Paulus possesses.'

'What does he do with his powers? Why does he come here? If a man really had such powers he would employ them, surely, to make some fresh discovery for the welfare of the human race. Consider, my dear, if he would only destroy one single disease.'

'I can only believe in what he says. He has been sent by his Friends to teach philosophy in the West.'

'Why has he been sent?'

'I do not know.'

'All the things you have told me about him are wonderful. But so is conjuring. It is wonderful when a plum pudding is made in a hat.'

Hetty shook her head.

‘You do not understand. Oh! we have been all our lives living close to the other world, within the reach of conversation, but we have never been told anything worth hearing, and this man comes and tells us the most beautiful things, and does the most wonderful things.’ Hetty paused. ‘When I think of the things he tells us my brain will not work. I cannot tell you what they are: but while he is speaking your heart glows and you are full of the most lovely thoughts. Cicely says that he opens the gates of Heaven—but we forget when we come back to earth what we have seen there. Oh! it is wonderful.’

‘Hetty—take care.’

‘Every day he makes Cicely see her brother at sea. Sometimes he reads our thoughts, sometimes he makes me—but only in our own room—say and do all kinds of things; sometimes he—yes, Kitty—he works miracles for us. Reading, he says, is too slow for us, and he makes us feel in a moment, and ten times as strongly, all that one feels when one reads a beautiful poem. And

he is so handsome. There is not a man in the world so handsome as Paul. Not broad-shouldered and jolly-looking like Tom Langston, but delicate and pale, with eyes which go right into your very soul.'

'Hetty!' Kitty repeated, 'take care; this is dangerous.'

Hetty blushed, but she laughed.

'Dangerous! Oh, no; there is no danger. I dare say any girl might fall in love with him, but he—oh! he is far, far above any girl: she might as well fall in love with the moon.'

'Fortunately, Miss Langston cannot see those eyes of his.'

'She can feel them. And in a moment she becomes his servant.'

'Does Mr. Brudenel know of all this?'

'Why, of course, he does not lay his will upon us before people—since the first evening. But Mr. Brudenel is as much under him as we are. He has conquered the whole house. He cures the servants of toothaches and things. Yesterday he overpowered the

butler and made him confess, in the presence of Cicely and myself, his whole past life and his rogueries—he is the master of the house.’

‘Strange!’ said Kitty. ‘I wonder how it will end.’

‘He will go away soon and leave us all miserable for life,’ said Hetty. ‘Well, one will remember. And oh! how stupid and dull all other men seem beside him. I think—Kitty, I am quite sure—that he has lived for thousands of years, and that his name is Apollo.’

‘Well, dear, I hope he will go away soon. It seems to me that the atmosphere of the house must be unwholesome.’

‘Yes, he will go away soon. And then—’ Hetty broke off with a sigh. ‘Don’t let us talk about him any more,’ she said.

She began idly to turn over some sketches in a portfolio. Suddenly she started and snatched up a drawing in chalk. It was a study of a head, showing the back and giving a little outline of the cheek.

‘Who is this?’ she asked.

‘That is the head of a very old friend of mine—a schoolfellow. Poor, dear Ziph!’

‘It is exactly like the head of Herr Paulus.’

‘Is it? I drew it in the garden one day before Ziph went away to New York.’

‘What did he go there for?’ She still kept looking at the picture.

‘He was a poet. He went there to sell his poetry.’

‘Oh!’ Hetty put down the picture. ‘Only a poet!’

‘And I fear he came to grief, because after three or four months nothing more was heard of him. And his parents could never get the least clue to what became of him. They think that he failed, and took to drink, and died. He was always delicate, and drink kills very rapidly in America. Poor, dear Ziph! He was going to do such splendid things. He had a portmanteau full of poems, and he was going to become famous, and he promised he would write to me and tell me of his grand successes. But he never told me of

any, and that portrait is all I have of my schoolfellow.'

'Were you in love with him?'

'No, Hetty, I think not. But I was fond of him. He wanted sympathy and some one to talk with and confide in, and I was handy for him. I was very proud of him. But not in love; at least, I suppose I was not. Poor Ziph!'

'What was his name?'

'Ziphion B. Trinder. I called him Ziph. His father kept a store—what you would call a general shop—in the little town where my father was a lawyer. But Ziph would not weigh out tea and sugar, and measure yards of calico; nor would he study law, which, in our country, is the only way to become President.'

'Ziphion Trinder. It is a funny name. Oh! how like the head is to Paul!'

'In New England some of us still have funny names. They christened me Bethiah, for instance, though you call me Kitty. I changed my Christian name, you see, because

Bethiah is, somehow, impossible out of New England. Poor Ziph! He is a genius, and the least fit person in the world to struggle for himself. He must be dead, or I should have heard something about him long since. Poor Ziph!’

A tear stood in her eye as she laid down the picture.

‘It is so like Paul,’ said Hetty. ‘It is wonderful.’

CHAPTER II.

IN THE OTHER ROOM.

A HOUSE is a theatre with many stages, on which many plays may be going on all at the same time, with no 'front,' unless M. le Diable Boiteux takes out a side of each room. Thus, while two girls full of their future talked in the studio, two old people with little but their past talked in the front parlour, which no longer pretended to be a drawing-room. Here Lavinia Medlock still carried on, but in a small way, the business of wise woman, adviser, and Interpreter for the Intelligences. In this country, if a woman lives in a back street and tells fortunes by cards, the police run her in, and the magistrate gives her two months, and her house is broken up, and her children are ruined for life, and she goes

to the workhouse, and foretells misfortunes to the other collegians, for even in the workhouse there are still fresh misfortunes to encounter in the shape of aches and pains, and twists and tortures, before the chaplain finally puts on his surplice to do them honour by walking before them in a short procession. Which shows how determined we are to suffer no witch to live in the land. But if a woman lives in a respectable house, and calls herself a medium and the chosen confidante of the spirits who dwell in the other world, she may do whatever she pleases without fear of police or magistrate. Which shows that we know how to distinguish.

Spirits are well known to choose for their favourite resorts, places and chambers which appear little desirable to cultivated man. It is no business of ours. This room, for instance, was very shabby and humble. Yet to think of all that had gone on in it—the séances, manifestations, levitations, table-turnings, rappings, messages, counsels, oracles, letters, verses, incarnations, spirit photo-

graphs, spirit songs, spirit humours, spirit hands, spirit kisses, spirit pinches, spirit tweakings,—wonderful to think of. And the room was just the same as it was before the spirits came at all, while her husband was still a clerk on a hundred and twenty pounds a year, and they let the first and second floors to pay the rent and taxes, and anything else they could get. The same chairs with black horsehair seats, the old black sofa, the same old red paper, now faded and patched with other colours laid on by Time, who is a painter as well as a destroyer, and the same cupboard beside the fireplace—Hetty's heart sank every morning at sight of it—the same great cupboard filled with stores of groceries and food. People who live in one room, generally keep their tea, sugar, coffee, jam, cakes, pies, bacon, ham, butter, bread, and wine—only there never is any wine—in the big cupboard beside the fireplace. Last year I paid a visit to the Marshalsea Prison and saw how Mr. Dorrit and his companions lived. In every room there were great cup-

boards beside the fireplace for the reception of household stores, a fact which throws a flood of light upon the imprisonment of debtors. And as it was in the Marshalsea Prison, so it was in Mrs. Medlock's ground floor front, except that there was no bed in it.

Mrs. Medlock sat in her professional chair at her professional table. She was exercising her profession. She was answering questions, solving difficulties, and consulting the spirits for her clients. Even in consulting the spirits there is a fashion. Many of them who once came to consult them regularly had gone off in other directions. They are now faith healers, captains in the Salvation Army, believers in the ten tribes, astrologers, votaries of palmistry, not to speak of Esoteric Buddhists. Somehow or other they get the same excitement, though in different ways. But they consult the spirits no longer. It is only in New York that the spirits are still consulted in the practical conduct of life.

This morning, however, Lavinia Medlock had two visitors.

The first was an elderly lady, richly dressed, who came in her carriage. She came once a week regularly, and used the spirits as a way of getting secret tips as to Stocks. She came in her own carriage: she was quick and imperious in her manner, and her eyes were exactly like small bright beads.

‘Well, Lavinia,’ she said, sitting down, ‘I’m very well satisfied on the whole with the last week’s work. The spirits were right for once.’

‘You know them too well,’ replied the Medium, humbly, ‘to expect them to be always right.’

‘After the awful losses they’ve caused me, I certainly do, Lavinia. Not that I blame you for it, you poor thing. You can’t help it, though sometimes I think there must be something wrong about your life, or your thoughts, or something. More holiness, Lavinia, more personal holiness, now, might attract a better class of spirit. Can’t you try for more holiness—early celebration, say—or a hair shirt—or something? Your

usefulness — and your income — might be trebled.'

Lavinia shook her head.

'Well, never mind—now listen.' She took a pocket-book out of her bag and extracted a paper. 'Now, get an answer to all these questions.'

This lady, in fact, spent her whole life and gave her whole thoughts to speculations on the Stock Exchange. She was a suspicious person, and mistrusted her broker, and as she had no knowledge of her own she turned for help to the spirits.

Presently, after the usual business, and having got her answers, she gathered up her bag and pocket-book and muff, and rose to go.

'Lavinia,' she said, 'think of what I said. More personal holiness, my dear.'

Half an hour later she had a second visitor. This time it was her old friend, Mr. James Berry. He was a little spare old man, one of those who dry up as they grow older, and shrink. His head was ornamented with a thick crop of grey hair, and a couple of white

and shaggy eyebrows. When Mr. James Berry began to consult Lavinia, thirty years before, that grey hair was black. Otherwise, there was no change in him at all, either in dress or manner. As for the latter it was slow and precise. He was certainly a methodical man—probably something in the city. Lavinia did not know what his profession might be. His convictions, based on certain startling replies to questions proposed, were now unalterable in spite of many rubs, and although the spirits sometimes treated him with mortifying neglect and even mendacity. In all times of difficulty and doubt, when most men find out the wisest course by examination, weighty argument, reason and wakeful thought, Mr. James Berry cast himself upon the spirits. That he was now, at sixty-five years of age, retired from active work, his savings all invested in shares of the Company in whose service he had been employed for fifty years, these shares producing fifteen per cent. on their first price, was acknowledged by himself as due solely to the prudent counsels bestowed

upon him by the spirits. That prudence, caution, good conduct, and thought had also something to do with it, may also be conceded. 'The spirits,' he said, 'may sometimes, when waggishly disposed, deceive and lead astray, and a wise man will look out for jokes, but in the long run they truly serve and advance the interests of those who trust them.'

When Mrs. Medlock's popularity began to wane, this excellent disciple remained faithful; when actual poverty fell upon her, he gave her money, and now, though his affairs seemed concluded, he still came to consult the oracle, because this method of guiding your life is like the practice of Auricular Confession, or the taking of opium or chloral. It relieves a man of personal responsibility, and drugs the conscience and deadens the will.

'Mam,' he said—not Madame or Madam—the variety of speech which we spell Ma'am, but plain short Mam—'I have come here to-day to consult you upon very petic'lar business—very petic'lar indeed.'

'Well, Mr. Berry, you know that I am

always ready and willing, though the spirits do sometimes, I allow——’

‘They certainly do take liberties; but not, I hope, this morning. Katie’s last mistakes I am willing to put down to skittishness, and young folks will be young, whether spirits or flesh. But not this morning, Mam. If Kitty is in the room——’ He looked about and there came three sharp raps from behind the fireplace—‘then I beg of her to be serious or to go. Because this is a serious matter.’

Again three raps were heard.

‘I think, Mr. Berry,’ said Lavinia, ‘that you may trust Katie this morning.’

‘I hope I may, Mam.’ He put his hat on the floor and took off his overcoat and comforter. ‘I hope I may; for this is a very serious morning with me, Mam, the most serious, I may say, in my life.’

‘Good gracious. Mr. Berry,’—Lavinia was startled at the haggard look in his face, which was generally comfortable and contented—‘what has happened?’

‘Nothing, Mam, yet. But a great deal may happen.’

‘Well, sit down, Mr. Berry, and tell me all that’s in your mind.’

Mr. Berry looked round the room.

‘Ha!’ he said, ‘I’ve been very uneasy—I’ve been awake two long nights thinking of it. But there’s a holy calm in this room. It soothes my mind only to be here, Mam—I feel better already.’

The shabbiness of the furniture did not appeal to him, nor the poverty-stricken aspect of the place; he knew all about poverty, and shabbiness of furniture had been with him, so to speak, from childhood; and the artistic side of his character, if he had any, was wholly undeveloped. This was the room where he had conversed with the spirits; it was sanctified to him by the awe with which even the most frivolous messages struck his soul: it was to him as sacred and as holy a place as any Baptist chapel to a fervent believer.

‘It is my own business that I am come

about, Mrs. Medlock. Mam'—he leaned forward, breathing hard, 'It may be ruin and the workhouse. Listen carefully. Don't let the spirits make so much as a single rap till you have heard the case right through. Do you know what my profession has been?'

'No, sir, I do not. That is a question which I never put to any spirits.'

'I have been all my life, Mam, a clerk in the service of a great company.' He paused to let his words produce their full effect. 'Never mind the name of that company. It was formerly a big house of business, owned by a single man, who made a great fortune and died. Then his sons turned it into a Limited Company. I've been in that house, under the father and the sons and the Board of Directors, for fifty years.'

'Well, Mr. Berry?'

'I was always a careful man, and had no wife to spend and squander. I saved money. When I retired from the Company's service last year they gave me a small pension; and one of the Directors offered me, very kindly,

as I thought, as many shares in the Company as my savings would buy. They give fifteen per cent. on the issue price, and I get, at the price I bought them—for they've gone up since—six-and-a-half per cent.; so that I thought I was doing pretty well.'

'You certainly did very well, Mr. Berry.'

'Yes, so I thought. But yesterday I got news which knocked me over. It came from an old friend in the house. He says he has found out the truth. He says that the house—it's a shipowning company—has been shaky for years. And now it may go any minute. On the other hand it may keep afloat and even weather the storm.'

'Well, Mr. Berry?'

'That is one man's statement. But another man, an older friend who is in the confidence of the Directors, tells me that the Company never was so safe and the shares never so high and never so certain to go higher.'

'Well?'

'Well—what am I to do? If I believe the second man I may be ruined if he is wrong.

If I believe the first man I shall have to sell at once, and I shall have to put up with three and a half or four per cent., instead of six and a half; and if he is wrong I shall have shown that I had no confidence in the old house where I have made my living. Advise me, Mrs. Medlock. It's life or death to me, to do the right thing now. I never asked you before on anything half so serious. Life and death it is. Tell me if the Company is safe. Put it fair and square to them. Oh! it is life or death or the workhouse to me. All my savings—all—are in the Company.'

Mrs. Medlock put the question. But she trembled and turned pale, because this, she saw, was a juncture beyond her powers to control. And if she misdirected her old friend—one may be a Medium and yet have affections and passions—she would consign him to a workhouse. And she could not rely upon her spirits. Therefore she awaited the result with terror.

The answer began with a hailstorm of raps, apparently from all parts of the room at

the same time. Presently they all ceased except from under the table, and the message began.

It is slow work receiving messages by raps, and it is greatly to be desired that the spirits would adopt the tape system, which is rapidly and easily read.

Presently, after many futile messages, and seeing Mrs. Medlock's face growing paler and more dejected, Mr. Berry sprang to his feet.

‘It’s too much,’ he said. ‘There is ruin before me, and she tells me nothing but that she is happy and so is her grandmother. Damn her grandmother, Mrs. Medlock!’

Lavinia burst into tears.

‘I am so sorry,’ she said. ‘Of late I seem to have lost my power. I am the sport of the spirits. Oh, my poor old friend, what shall I do for you? what can I do for you? Oh! and after all these years! And when I ought to guide you in your difficulty! Oh! it’s no use to go on—not a bit of use.’ She wrung her hands while Mr. Berry sat down,

and gazed at her blankly. Then an idea struck her.

‘Mr. Berry,’ she said. ‘There’s a wonderful young man staying with Lady Augusta Brudenel.’

‘With whom?’ he asked, sharply.

‘With Lady Augusta and Mr. Cyrus Brudenel. Let me ask him.’

‘No, no; not the Brudenels—not the Brudenels.’

‘I don’t want to ask them. I will not mention any names. I will only say—“Herr Paulus, here is a case,” and I will tell him your case. “Advise me on it for this gentleman”—and perhaps he will advise—“and say nothing to anybody about it,” and he will keep the secret. Oh! Mr. Berry, it’s our only chance. Let me ask him. Let me. Oh! my poor old friend, you have done so much for me; let me try to do something for you. Let me ask him!’

‘But hide the name,’ said Mr. Berry.

‘I will ask him this very day. I will go to him this afternoon, and unless he is in

Abyssinia—sometimes he spends his afternoons in Abyssinia—he will give me an answer. I am sure he will.'

'It's the workhouse, Mrs. Medlock. Think of that! Ruin and the workhouse unless you get a true reply.'

CHAPTER III.

IN ABYSSINIA AND ELSEWHERE.

MR. CYRUS BRUDENEL, engaged with his new instructor in the Study, was greatly changed in one short week from the Cyrus Brudenel who had proudly introduced Herr Paulus to his priceless collection of books on spiritualism, magic, sorcery, astrology, alchemy, and the great world of Jargon and Pretended Power. The brain reels only to think of the Colossal Lies which are bound up in these volumes, and of all the Mendacious Literature of Magic, and of the multitudes who have been dragged into the paths which lead inevitably to more Lies and more Pretence. Mr. Brudenel's own chief Lie had been comparatively harmless ; it was merely a Pretence of reading and studying these books, truly terrible in their

stupidity, weariness, and falsehood. Now, even that Pretence was abandoned : the books stood untouched upon the shelves ; the papers and journals relating to the old spiritualism were unopened : Mr. Brudenel no longer caught at some miserable platitude as a message from a glorified spirit ; the whole current of his thoughts was deranged.

As for his Study, it was a large and noble room, built out at the back of the house, where was a broad and noble garden, as generous in its proportions as if the house had been miles away from London instead of in St. John's Wood, and flanked with great trees, as well as with lawns and flowerbeds. There were two windows to the Study, one at the end of the room and one at the side ; and they were fitted with double sashes, to keep out the noise of the outer world.

The silence of the Study was almost as perfect as if it had been placed in the middle of Dartmoor, save that there was no distant tinkling of a sheep bell and no song of the lark in the sky. If any sound reached this

retreat it was nothing louder than the low rumbling caused by a coal-waggon, or by a Parcel Post cart from the road outside. The books were arranged in mahogany book-cases, built out as in great libraries, but low, except at the back, where the shelves went up to the ceiling. There were busts of great magicians placed about; and before the fire there was a large table with one or two chairs. The silence of the room; the air of mystery which its use imparted to it—you may feel the same thing in an empty Freemasons' Lodge; the books, which looked as learned as if they contained the works of Plato and all his disciples instead of the Pretenders and the Liars: all fitted the room for the Message which was being delivered in it.

Mr. Cyrus Brudenel sat in one of the chairs to receive the Message. On the table at his right hand was a little pile of unopened letters. His face was troubled by something, but a great and remarkable change had fallen upon it. All the pomposity had gone; that was immediately apparent. His eyes were no

longer irritable and suspicious ; it was a face which betokened submission.

The Leader had wholly submitted himself. He was now led. He was a disciple ; he had no longer any authority. The young man who stood before him was his master.

‘So,’ said Paul, ‘it still troubles you, does it? I thought we talked it over yesterday.’

‘It is so extremely mysterious. Every day, with your help, I go away and receive instruction. Every day, when I come back, it is with the most glowing heart and with a mind full of happiness and gratitude. I cannot describe to you the infinite joy I experience at that moment.’

‘I know it myself,’ said Paul.

‘And then, immediately, while I seek to recall what I have been taught, it vanishes away, and I cannot recall it. Nothing could possibly be more baffling and disappointing.’

‘It must be purposely done. You advance, without knowing it, in those hours when you are not with the Master. There goes on in your brain a process of uncon-

scious growth. Unfelt by yourself, the things you have learned are gradually taking root while the soil is being prepared for their growth.'

Mr. Brudenel shook his head doubtfully.

'I cannot understand it,' he said.

'Some day you will remember suddenly and fully. Then you will have enough to think about. But as to the manner and the time—leave it to the Master.'

Mr. Brudenel shook his head doubtfully.

'It is not for me,' he said, 'to question any methods that may be adopted. I looked, when the instruction began, for slow progress, because I am not naturally quick of apprehension. But I am tenacious. When I was a boy they all owned that I was tenacious. And yet I have retained nothing.'

'You must have patience.'

'I am no longer young, and the time is flying.'

'Mr. Brudenel.' Paul, who was standing, shook an admonitory forefinger. 'All this comes of an unwillingness to put away the old

ideas. Time? Youth? What are these among our people? What does it matter if months or even years pass away before you acquire even the rudiments of the perfect knowledge? Do you suppose that Izák the Master does not know what happens? Do you think that he would suffer it to go on if he did not approve of it? Remember that you are in new hands, receiving new ideas. Why, your mind is not cleared of the old ones even yet.'

'Truly, it may be so.'

'May be so?' repeated Paul impetuously. 'Why, of course it is. It must be so.'

'You always bring me hope, my friend.'

'What else have I come for except to bring you hope as well as wisdom? Patience, patience. Presently all will be at your feet. Truth, which is Power; Knowledge, which you can use for the benefit of your fellow-men. You will heal and prevent disease. You will lengthen life. You will solve the difficulties of social life. Why, sometimes I

—who belong to the School of Meditation—think that yours is the happiest lot of all.’

Mr. Brudenel’s check flushed and his eyes brightened.

‘If I could always believe this. But there are times, Paul—I confess—when I crave just as I used to crave for a fuller manifestation—even fuller than this.’

‘Glutton! what more can you have?’—Paul showed a smiling face, full of reassuring cheerfulness. ‘Yet a fuller shall be shown to you, and that before long. As for me, I could never use the power as you will use it, because to me the acquisition of knowledge is sufficient, whilst to you the exercise of power is everything. So in science, there are men who spend their lives in following pure mathematics, for the sake of the things continually revealed to them; while others must stop at every step to make a practical application to the uses of the world of what they have discovered. I am the pure Mathematician; you, Mr. Brudenel, are the Practical Applier. Now—silence; it is the time.

Listen. When you hear the voice of the Master, fix your eyes upon mine intently : separate your thoughts from all earthly things : speak not : move not.' He raised his hand and looked up as one who waits to hear a signal. 'Master !' he cried. 'Izák ibn Menelek !'

Then, far, far away, yet distinct and clear and audible, there followed the reply, 'My children, I am ready.'

'He is waiting. Now. Oh ! move not : speak not : think not : a moment more, and you will be gone, swifter than thought, swifter than electricity, to the hills of Abyssinia.'

As he spoke he leaned over and met his pupil's eyes with his own, black and lustrous, commanding and compelling. In less than a minute Mr. Brudenel's head bent forward, his face grew rigid, his eyes dilated, and his frame stiffened. Paul stood up and breathed deeply ; then he pushed up an eyelid and looked at the glazed eye, as one who administers chloroform and wishes to ascertain if it has yet taken full effect.

‘You are now, my friend,’ he murmured, ‘on the high road to Abyssinia. Izák ibn Menelek has much to say to you. Stay there awhile.’

Thirty years of Physical Research had perhaps made Mr. Brudenel a ready, as well as a willing subject to certain influences which some call by one name and some by another. They may all be reduced to one and the same force. He was now, as Paul had promised him, in Abyssinia, or somewhere else far away from his own Study, apparently lifeless and unconscious.

Paul stood looking at him for a few moments. It is not everyone who can assist his friends to go in an instant to Abyssinia, and he might fairly have shown some pride in the achievement. But he did not. The smile had left his lips and his face was grave and full of business, and he proceeded to behave in a very strange and remarkable manner. First, he went to the door of the study and locked it, though no one in the house would have dared to disturb Mr.

Brudenel in his study. Then he drew the heavy curtain across the door so that no one should be able to see through the keyhole, though not even a housemaid would have dared to do such a thing.

Paul next took up the handful of letters which had arrived that morning, opened them all, read them, and laid them in the basket which received the day's correspondence until it was answered. Apparently, the letters yielded him no information.

Mr. Brudenel's bundle of keys lay on the table beside the letters. Paul took it up and opened the safe which stood against the wall in the far corner. It was full of papers, legal documents, and such things. Paul laid everything upon the table and leisurely examined all the papers. This took him half-an-hour, during which the unconscious man moved not so much as an eyelash.

'There isn't,' he said, 'a single scrap of paper to help. Yet I am perfectly certain, from what Lavinia said, that the old man meant Brudenel and Company, the ship-own-

ing company, the man who made his fortune by the business, the same who retired and made it into a Limited concern—it *must* be Brudenel and Company.’ He considered a little.

‘I just hate to do it,’ he said. ‘If there was any other way—but it does him no harm—and knowledge is power. Come, old boy.’ He made a gesture and Mr. Brudenel moved and half opened his eyes. ‘No, not yet, you can come back from Abyssinia, but you have got to do some work for me before you wake up. Turn your chair round to the table.’ Mr. Brudenel sat in one of those chairs which revolve upon their seats without altering the position of the legs. ‘So, that will do, take up your pen. Now the notepaper. Write at my dictation in your own handwriting.’ Mr. Brudenel, still with closed eyes, obeyed. That is to say, he took certain sheets of note paper and wrote one after the other, at Paul’s dictation, a few short letters in his usual handwriting, signing in the usual way. Paul read the letters and laid them in the basket.

‘There,’ he said, ‘you will never know how these letters came to be written. Now you must answer a few questions if you please.’

The sleeping man sat bolt upright in his chair with eyes closed and pale cheeks. There was not the least sign of life in him, or of attention, or of hearing what was said to him.

‘Tell me,’ said Paul, ‘what fortune does your daughter possess in her own right and apart from anything you may leave her?’

‘Sibyl has ten thousand pounds,’ Mr. Brudenel replied. One unaccustomed to those things would have shuddered and trembled. For his voice sounded weak and far away. He spoke with no more movement than the mere opening and shutting of his lips; when he finished his answer his lips closed with a snap. It was like insulting Roger Bacon’s famous head; it was like questioning a corpse. The answer came—a true answer—but one felt that the will was held captive, and the brain was unconscious.

‘Are you her sole guardian?’

‘I am.’

‘Where is her money invested?’

‘It is all in Brudenel and Company.’

‘Are you also sole guardian and executor for the two Langstons, Cicely and her cousin Tom?’

‘I am.’

‘What fortunes have they?’

‘Tom has fifteen thousand pounds. Cicely has twelve thousand pounds. If Tom’s cousin, Sir Percival, should prove to be dead, he will succeed to the property and the title. Tom is to have his at the age of five-and-twenty. Cicely at one-and-twenty. Their birthdays fall on the same day. Consequently, they will both come into possession of their property on April the twenty-third.

‘And it is now March the thirtieth. Where is their money?’

‘It is all invested in shares of Brudenel and Company.’

‘As for your own money, now. Have you any shares in the company?’

‘No. I sold out to buy land.’

‘And Lady Augusta’s fortune?’

‘It is in the hands of trustees.’

‘Brudenel and Company has been a great House, has it not?’

‘Yes, a very great House.’

‘You have trusted it entirely, have you not?’

‘Entirely.’

‘Do you know the present Secretary?’

‘Yes.’

‘Go to his office. Is he engaged?’

‘The Chairman of the Company is with him. The books are open on the table. They are talking.’

‘Tell me what they are saying.’

‘The Secretary says, “I do not see how the smash can be averted another month. It must come then—it may come before.”’

Then the narrator changed his voice and became the Chairman, and from the agitation of his voice you would have inferred the mental anxiety of the Chairman.

‘Not another month? It is a terrible situation. And the shares keep up. Not a breath outside.’

‘That breath may blow any moment. You had better think of the position of the Directors when the smash does come! If we do not declare the truth before long you may all be put in the Dock. As for me, I suppose I am only a servant.’

‘Yet—yet—for God’s sake let us keep the position of the company secret as long as we can. While there is life there is hope.’

‘That will do,’ said Paul. He considered for a few minutes. ‘There is a great deal more here,’ he said, ‘than the interests of poor old James Berry. There is a Thing to do, here, which may be a grander feat than any I have ever dreamed of. Tell me,’ he addressed the inanimate Cyrus Brudenel, ‘tell me where you have put your share certificates.’

‘They are at the Bank.’

‘Oh! I wonder if they are necessary. Hang it! A man ought to know everything. I wonder how long an operation of this sort takes, and how it can be done. Tell me,’ again he addressed Mr. Brudenel. ‘Who are your Brokers?’

‘I have none. The Bank would do any business for me if I wanted it done.’

‘Oh! Turn you chair round, and write one or two letters, now, in your own handwriting.’

He dictated two or three letters. Then he took the cheque-book out of the safe and made his patient sign three blank cheques.

‘So,’ he said, ‘that is accomplished. I wonder if anything will happen to prevent the thing from coming off? Why should anything happen?’

‘One question more,’ he asked. ‘Do you know anything of one James Berry?’

‘There was a James Berry in my father’s service. He went into the Company’s service afterwards. He was in the Accountant’s Department?’

‘Has James Berry any shares in the Company?’

‘Yes. He has invested all his savings in the Company.’

‘Humph! My conjecture was right then, and Brudenel and Company are going to smash.

Fifteen thousand for Tom, twelve thousand for Cicely, and ten thousand for Sibyl, and all the old man has got is an estate which can't be sold. That's bad for Tom and Cicely and Sibyl. On the other hand, if the Thing comes off—oh! it's wonderful. Lavinia, I owe you a good turn for this; and, somehow, I'll pay you back, though at present I don't see any way. And now,' he said, putting the three cheques and the letters very carefully into his pocket-book. 'Unless I am very greatly mistaken, here will be a bigger *coup* than anything ever before attempted or accomplished by medium, clairvoyant, or occult philosopher. Paul, my boy, when this thing is noised abroad your head shall touch the skies. And then, when all the world is talking about you, in the very nick of time, when everybody is expecting something even greater, and they are prepared for any miracle, you will suddenly vanish, go back to Abyssinia, or else to the old place—they can't think of looking for so great a man in the old place—and to live for ever in the memory of men. How to support the rest of life? Well,

I don't know. That's a problem which must wait. Meanwhile——' He shook his head as if there was a side of the question which he did not care to look at.

Then he sat down and pondered for a whole quarter of an hour. Beside him sat the figure of a man who might have been a corpse, so still and white and silent was he, so rigid and so regardless.

'Is it worth the trouble?' he asked himself. 'A month or so of glory and success, with all the people wondering and staring, and all the scientific men angry and disconcerted, and a thousand pens set agoing, and the Spiritualists triumphant at last. Then they will look for more, and there will be no more, because I cannot expect any more coincidences, and the worker of miracles must retire, if possible, without being seen to go. He must vanish like a goblin in a story. And he must never come back again. To be seen again would be fatal. He must be never more heard of. Well, I think I know a place which is obscure enough and forgotten enough

for anyone to live unknown and concealed. It will be miserable enough after all I have seen and done ; but after all it will not be half so miserable as if I had stayed there all the time, no better off than the obscure folk who live out their dull and monotonous lives there, and are buried at last in the cemetery. I shall at least have the memory of the great stir that I have made in the world.

‘Chatterton,’ he went on, walking backwards and forwards, ‘had his gift and he used it. Nobody blames him now for the deceit which he employed. He had his gift. I have mine. There is not a man in the world who can do what I can. Not one. They can all mesmerise, but they cannot make the patient see things far off, report secrets long since hidden away, hear conversations and repeat them, and think as I choose them to think. I use my gift in my own way, and for the same purposes as those of Chatterton. I want honour, not money.

‘No one shall ever say I wanted money. I came here without asking for any, and I

shall go away with clean hands. Money? Why, what money could repay the services I shall render this household if the *coup* comes off. And I suppose that unless I tell them, no one ever will know why I came or why I did it, or how I did it. And now for Mr. James Berry.'

He sat down at the table and wrote a short letter.

'Dear Mrs. Medlock,—I have thought over the difficulties of your friend and have been enabled to help him. Tell him to lose no time in selling out—but to do so secretly. Let him tell none of his friends what he has done. As you have not told me the name of this Company it is not possible for me to advise you more exactly in this matter. Tell him, however, that he *must sell* and that immediately.

'Yours very sincerely,

'PAULUS.'

'That,' he said, 'is the first step in the history of the great *coup*.'

He looked round the room. The table was covered with papers which he had taken from the safe. These he replaced carefully.

‘The drawer of the safe,’ he said, ‘reminds me that the day after to-morrow the Indian paper is to be discovered there. I thought that was rather clever, but the new surprise beats it hollow.’ He locked up the safe, put the keys into Mr. Brudenel’s pocket and arranged the table exactly as it had been before unconsciousness fell upon him.

When he was quite satisfied, he bent over Mr. Brudenel as he had bent over the heads of the two girls.

‘You have been in Abyssinia,’ he said. ‘You have been conversing with an aged philosopher, standing under a palm tree beside a fountain; on every side arose mighty mountains; there were no signs of human life; the sun was hot and the skies cloudless. No one was with you but the Philosopher. As he talked with you your heart leaped up and your eyes glowed. For he spake of things which filled you with awe and wonder

and a trembling joy. And he promised that you, too, in the future—— Awake!’

Mr. Brudenel opened his eyes and looked about him. Suddenly he understood where he was, and he seized Paul’s hand and clasped it warmly.

‘Oh! my friend—my friend—’ he cried, ‘I have come back too soon. I have been—I have been—in a Heaven of joy and happiness’—it is rare, indeed, that an elderly man is forced to exhibit the outward and visible signs of joy. We know them in youth. Many causes may make the cheek burn, the pulse to beat faster, the heart to glow, the breath to come and go, the eyes to be dimmed and dewy—dear me! I have known a young man taken in this way, just because a girl has allowed him to kiss her. But I have never seen any old man except Mr. Brudenel exhibit these signs of youthful joy and happiness. ‘Paul!’ he cried out in an ecstasy, ‘I have never, never, enjoyed such a morning.’

‘Tell me about it.’

‘I was received by the Master in the

bottom of a valley beside a spring of water—there was a palm tree or two—on all sides rose great mountains. He taught me all the morning. He filled me with a joy unspeakable. He promised that, before long, I too——’ Here he stopped.

‘You too?’

‘It is the same thing always,’ Mr. Brudeneel cried, the joy going out of his face. ‘When I return I forget all that I have been told.’

‘Again, you forget. It is as I told you. Your mind is not yet saturated. You have not yet shaken off the old prejudices and traditions. My friend, you have spent two hours’—he looked at his watch—‘two hours and a half in Abyssinia. You have meantime sat in this chair, to all appearance, dead. Now remember. You came here after breakfast; you read your letters; you appear to have answered some of them; you then received me.’

‘I remember that. But I have forgotten the letters.’

Paul handed him the basket. Yes, there

were the letters in his own handwriting. 'You then detached your thoughts from things earthly and were transported to Abyssinia. I went with you and stood with you, invisible to yourself, and returned with you. I would repeat the whole conversation, but I must not. It is not allowed. Patience, however. A few more days and you shall be master of the whole. And oh, I had nearly forgotten. It is the day after to-morrow that you are to present the Indian newspaper to your friends.'

Mr. Brudenel coloured, and became confused. 'Paul—I must confess. What will you think?'

'There is no need to confess anything. You have been to the drawer, tempted by curiosity to break your promise; what did you find?'

'Nothing.'

'You see what comes of trying to deceive your friends.'

'I deserve everything. I have fooled away the most wonderful manifestation.'

‘Certainly—you deserve everything. Perhaps it is on account of your brother’s promise that you are stricken with forgetfulness every day. But do not despair. The Master is not implacable. You may invite your friends just the same as if you had not looked in the drawer. By the way, you are quite—quite certain’—Paul’s eyes were of searching severity—‘that no one could possibly have had access to the safe?’

‘No one could possibly open the safe except myself.’

‘Then, Mr. Brudenel, invite whom you please, and enjoy a triumph which has yet been achieved by no spiritualist or so-called occult philosopher. It is a mark of signal favour and, believe me, my dear friend’—Paul clasped his hand warmly—‘not the last—not the last—that you will receive.’

CHAPTER IV.

SHOULD THIS HAPPEN?

ONCE more the two young men were sitting at midnight in Tom's workshop, but their bearing towards each other was now changed. There was no diffidence on the one hand nor suspicion on the other. Diffidence had changed to confidence, and in place of suspicion was avowed enmity on public grounds with allowed friendship on private grounds.

‘People are clamouring for more of your confounded miracles, old man,’ said Tom presently.

‘So I gather. They will not be satisfied. At least—well, there is one thing I promised. If you are at all interested in what you call

miracles, you may be present to-morrow evening.'

'You mean the great Indian trick? Yes; my guardian has invited his friends to witness it. He says you gave him the paper a month ago.'

'He asked for a copy of that day's "Friend of India." So it came. That is very simple.'

'Perfectly simple. Quite simple; what happens every day, in fact. Nothing miraculous about that, is there?'

'He then placed it in a safe, of which he alone keeps the key, and he undertook not to show it to anyone until the day when the mail should bring that day's paper to London. It will arrive to-morrow, and his copy can be compared with that received in the usual way.'

'I see. But it seems rather a pity—doesn't it?—that he waited a whole month?'

'You mean?' Paul knew perfectly well what Tom meant, but yet he asked this question.

'A miracle, my dear boy, in order to be

perfectly conclusive, should leave no loophole at all for doubt as to the fact. That is the whole essence of a miracle, and it is here that your Friends go bungling. Now, if you produced to-day's "Friend of India" in open court, so to speak, before a body of scientific men, who might photograph it, so as to multiply copies, and if you on the same day had the whole contents of that day's paper telegraphed from Delhi, the question would then be, not whether the thing had been done, about which there could be no doubt, but whether there was any way of explaining it other than miraculous. For instance, the old slate trick——'

'Oh! but everybody knows how that is done.'

'True, but the fact is that it was done. We recognised that, and had only to find out how it was done. How about your miracle of to-morrow?'

'I did not say it was mine.'

'Your friends' miracle then. You see they haven't complied with the first conditions

of a miracle, that the fact itself must be beyond doubt. My guardian says that four weeks ago he received a copy of that very day's "Friend of India." Very well, it rests on his word, not on yours as well, does it?' Tom looked up curiously as if he was trying to get some admission.

'If necessary, my word would perhaps not be wanting.' There was the least possible absence of heartiness in the answer.

'Quite so, if necessary. Very well then. He says he put it in the safe. Why did he not instantly produce the sheet and confound the infidel? Can't you see that a more miraculous thing than the transportation of a newspaper ten thousand miles in an hour was never even attempted in the palmiest days of witchcraft and magic? Don't you know that the occult philosophers have been asked over and over again to do this, and that they have always refused to do it?'

'You forget one thing, that if such a thing was done it might be made subservient to

commercial purposes and an object of self-interest.'

'That is what the occult philosophers say. It is only worth considering on the supposition that everybody could perform the miracle. If your friends have the secret in their own hands they can keep it and make the performance a rare and interesting event. Come, now, put it to them frankly. Let us have, for once, a miracle that cannot be attacked anyhow. My guardian deposits this precious paper in his safe and keeps it there for a month. He says that nobody can get at that safe except himself. Rather than believe in this miracle I am prepared to disbelieve his assertion. Come, now, old man, I don't mind being frank with you. I think you are up to some game which may be anything, but isn't, I am sure it isn't, the old vulgar game of plunder. I rather believe you are trying by the exercise of certain gifts and clever dodges to make yourself a great man. Very well, I have a similar ambition about myself only in another direction altogether. You are going

in for miracles. It isn't worth while carrying on the stale old spiritualistic humbug. You know that, and you are trying to strike out a new line. Give us a real, genuine, indisputable miracle, the fact of which cannot be denied.'

'I am pleased to have your good opinion, Tom,' Paul laughed, cheerfully. 'Whatever my ambitions may be, they do not work in the direction of plunder. You shall never be able to say that of me. And as to what you think——' he paused. 'Tom,' he said, earnestly, 'you were so very frank with me at the outset as to tell me you thought I was a humbug like the rest of them. You know, now, that I have no intercourse with their world of lying spirits. I do not send round the hat for a little collection. Yet, believe me, Tom, there is far more in the world than you have yet understood. There are powers of which you know nothing.'

'That,' said Tom, 'I do not deny.'

'Would you believe in those powers if I

were to give you what you call an undeniable miracle?’

‘I should accept the fact and try to find out how it was done.’

‘Very good,’ Paul laughed again. ‘I think I may hope. I do not promise to work such a miracle as will satisfy even you. That is to say, you will not be able to deny the fact, and you will not be able, the least bit in the world, to find out how it was accomplished. No natural force with which you are acquainted will be able to account for it. No explanation will occur to you, or to any of your scientific friends, that will in the least satisfy you. I say that I don’t actually engage myself to do this thing, but there seems a chance that I may do it.’

‘I should be very much obliged to you if you will. I shall take it as a personal compliment, and a great kindness to myself. A genuine miracle, I confess, would be received by the whole world, scientific and otherwise, with considerable satisfaction. Nothing in the way of mesmerism, though.’

‘Very well. Mesmerism, however, must not be despised. It is a natural force entirely outside the investigations of scientific men, and neglected by them. It would be well if you were to consider the subject. I could teach you a good deal in it, for instance, which might astonish you and lead you to follow it up.’

‘I will be your pupil perhaps, but not now.’

‘As for my miracle, now. Conceive of some event happening which would seem at first absolutely destructive of your dearest wish.’

‘What is my dearest wish?’ Tom replied, quietly, with a flush in his cheek.

‘I will tell you. I believe that there is no one in this house or outside it who knows or suspects that you are engaged to Miss Brudenel.’

Tom started. ‘How do you know that?’

‘How do I know a great many things? I know, you see, the dearest wish of your heart.’

‘Well, you have found out somehow what we thought was unknown to anybody but ourselves. It is true we are engaged. And now, I hope, you can keep the secret you have discovered.’

‘I can. Miss Brudenel, I told you long ago, will never be the Vestal Virgin of the cause. Suppose, however, that something—I know not what—interfered between you. I talk at random, perhaps—say, something which would prevent your marriage for years—perhaps altogether—suppose it required nothing short of a miracle to remove that obstacle.’

‘Well?’

‘Well, suppose that miracle performed—would you still disbelieve?’

‘I should. No doubt I should accept the miracle in such an event with profound gratitude, but I should then want to know how it was done. Because, you see, everything in the world is worked by laws, and your miracle could only be worked by some law unknown to myself.’

‘Lady Augusta and her friends,’ said Paul smiling, ‘would follow the unscientific method. They would accept the Miracle just as you would, and they would then ask for More.’

CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND FUNCTION.

THE Second Great Manifestation, though more brief in its duration and simpler in character than the first, was universally acknowledged to be of far greater importance. Nothing, in fact, not even the events which followed—to be sure, these were chiefly of a private nature, and could only be whispered—did more to raise Herr Paulus to that eminence which for a brief season he enjoyed, and might have been still enjoying but for circumstances which will be duly narrated. The first Function was undoubtedly sweet and precious, both to behold and to describe afterwards. It thrilled, but the emotions excited were on familiar lines: it awed and impressed those who assisted, but it did not actually take one

unexpectedly. Things like unto it had been seen before. Invisible bells had been rung, invisible music had been played—indeed, Mediums always bring along a concertina or an accordion for fear the spirits—who cannot play anything else, not even a harp—should forget to bring an instrument; invisible hands have often done very astonishing things: papers have before now fluttered about the room, descending like the rain from a clear sky: there has been the exhibition of spirit photographs and pictures: there has been telegraphing: there has been clairvoyance: all such feats have an historical character. Stories of a like nature could be adduced, narrated, and compared. In point of picturesqueness, and beauty, and fitness, however, the first function left nothing to be desired; while its operator appeared to be of a much higher character than any of those who accomplish their results in the dark. One could not imagine Herr Paulus stooping to impose upon his audience by the common and well-known methods; even those who were least

credulous acknowledged this immense superiority.

But, as regards the Function of this evening, as Mr. Brudenel truly said at its close—it is only the anticipation of a few pages—‘The Thing’—he modestly called it a Thing—‘which we have this day been privileged to witness, is an achievement beyond a parallel in the History of Spiritualism.’ You will acknowledge as much when you hear what it was. ‘It marks an Epoch. It announces our arrival upon a Higher Plane: it shows that we have left behind us for ever the days of lying and mocking spirits: our labours have not been in vain: it is the first visible step of our New Departure: it shows us clearly that our feet are standing at last upon the Solid Rock: it teaches us without a doubt that our faces are turned towards the way of Truth.’

Truly, as you will see, Mr. Brudenel exaggerated not a whit. Those who witnessed this stupendous conquest over time and space, went home awed and humbled. The longer

they dwelt upon it the more it impressed their imagination ; the more they pondered over the possibility of deception the more they were bewildered. Even the sceptics were for the moment confounded. Nothing, however, really confounds the sceptic. He is like those little figures made of painted pith resting on little globes of lead which spring to their feet with only the greater elasticity and resolution the harder you knock them down. The best miracle in the world is wasted on a sceptic. You might as well tell ghost stories to a lawyer.

The company invited to witness this manifestation was less numerous than that which gathered together for the first, but it included all the important people. There was no dinner party, and they were invited for nine. When they arrived, they were shown into Mr. Brudenel's study, where Sibyl received them. It was understood that Lady Augusta and Mr. Brudenel would appear at the right moment with the hero of the evening.

All the well-known leaders of the spiritualists were there, including Mr. Athelstan Kilburn and the Rev. Amelius Horton. The Society of Psychical Research was represented by a Deputation, specially invited, from Cambridge. It consisted of a Junior Fellow of Trinity and a certificated graduate in honours from Newnham. On the way—it has nothing to do with the story—the Deputation fell in love with each other, and got engaged on the way back, but fell out over the Report which they had to draw up, and so the marriage never came off. Science, always suspicious, was represented by a Professor of the highest distinction. He was known to be hostile to everything which he could not reduce to the realm of known physics, and always went about to such manifestations with the avowed intention of exposing the trick—he always called it a trick—and he never did expose anything, because he knew nothing of legerdemain, although he was learned in electricity. The profession was represented by Mr. Emanuel

Chick and Mrs. Lavinia Medlock, as usual—there are few recent additions to the old school of spiritualists. The Rev. Benjamin Rudge was also present, prepared to chronicle whatever took place. There were also present a large number of the ladies who ‘take interest;’ among them the ardent believer, who has always something to whisper, some new mysterious utterance or promise; the woman who only half believes, but trembles and thinks it is wicked; the woman who loves to be startled and prefers a séance to a melodrama; the woman in search of a New Gospel—she is very common in these days; the woman who talks the language of the esoteric Buddhist; the woman of unsatisfied soul who yearns for a fuller life—with others. I suppose that the purely incredulous world was represented by Tom Langston, who changed his mind and came—to meet the Professor, he said, but I think he was anxious to see what would be done. Cicely Langston sat retired, with Hetty beside her.

‘I understand, Miss Brudenel,’ said Mr. Rudge, in a loud and masterful voice, ‘that we are summoned here to-night in order to witness what will be—if we are rightly informed—a truly stupendous event, and the most remarkable manifestation of spiritual power ever witnessed.’

‘Pray, Mr. Rudge,’ Sibyl interrupted shortly, ‘ask me nothing. I know nothing. I can promise nothing.’

‘It is rumoured, then—’ Mr. Rudge smiled with amicable forgivingness, because he was used to be snubbed by Miss Brudenel—‘we will only say then, that it is rumoured, that we are this evening to behold a document which has been transported from some part of India to this house with the swiftness of an electric message. If this be so——’

Mr. Emanuel Chick sniffed loudly. He looked not only shabby this evening, but hungry. In fact he was hungering for Paul’s blood. It was the first note of hostile incredulity.

‘Oh!’ cried Lavinia, clasping her hands.

‘It will be the exercise of a power far beyond anything ever vouchsafed to me. And yet there was a time——’

‘Before we all go off into ecstasies,’ said Mr. Emanuel Chick, ‘we had better see what happens. On the last occasion there were fireworks—I call them fireworks—with mesmerism. Perhaps we shall only have, after all, more fireworks with mesmerism.’

‘It cannot be said,’ said Mr. Athelstan Kilburn, ‘that our young friend receives either sympathy or encouragement from his professional brethren. Surely they are above the petty feeling of jealousy.’

‘He will get no encouragement from me,’ Mr. Chick replied. ‘I pretend to nothing but the good old lines. I am a Medium—only a Medium. No fireworks for me, sir. You know what to expect from me. If the spirits wish to speak through me, they can. That’s all. I believe some people have received messages which spoke for themselves, and were a little more important than a lady in a mesmeric trance. We shall see.’

‘Hetty,’ Cicely whispered, ‘it is that odious man who always makes me feel as if he carried evil spirits about with him. Do you think that his presence will affect Paul’s powers?’

‘No, I am sure it will not. But, oh! I wish it was over! And oh! I wish he would not show off to a great room full of people.’

‘Perhaps he must.’

‘His powers should be kept sacred, and shown to none but——but the people he loves,’ Hetty murmured. ‘Oh! to make a trade and a show and a means of gain out of such a power as his! It would be too dreadful.’

‘Whisper me everything, Hetty dear, just as he does it. Oh! if he would only make me able so see it. He could if he chose. Perhaps this evening—but tell me all, Hetty.’

‘I suppose,’ said the Professor of Science to Tom Langston, quietly, ‘that there will be an opportunity afforded one of submitting any experiment we may be privileged to witness to the ordinary tests.’

‘Oh! yes,’ Tom replied. ‘Why not? Herr Paulus’s performances are unexpected, but they are all done in the light. I don’t quite see how anything he has done as yet could be tested. You see things, and you wonder how they are done; that is all.’

‘Tell me about him.’

‘He is a young man. He has been staying here a month now. In this house, you know, we are always up to our necks in magic and mystery, but since he came we have learned to despise the old things. We do not care about rapping; we no longer ask if our grandmothers are happy. We do not look for incarnated spirits. We have no dark séances.’

‘All this seems distinct gain,’ said the Professor.

‘Yes; in their place we have acquired a beautiful freedom of transport. We converse with anybody, all over the world. We find out what is going on everywhere. Mr. Brudenel, my guardian, goes off to Abyssinia every morning for instruction, and arrives home in time for luncheon. Lady Augusta

is going through a course of King Solomon's Wisdom; the girls are always more or less mesmeric; the housemaids no longer go to the dentist when they have got a toothache. Herr Paulus leaves his earthly body on his bed while he goes off to have a crack with his friends in Russia, in Thibet, in Africa.'

The Professor laughed.

'You cannot test any of these things,' he said. 'If people choose to believe in common cheats and impostors——'

'Pardon me, Professor. Herr Paulus is not a common cheat and impostor. I do not quite know what he is, but he wants no money to begin with.'

'That is unusual.'

'It is, in this house, at least.'

'But they talk of a newspaper, or something interesting, brought here in a single moment from an enormous distance.'

'Ten miles would be as good as three thousand, but it wants a big distance to strike the imagination. In fact, Professor, I have reason to know that the claim set up this

evening will be the power to convey things—not only messages, or by the wire—but actual things—parcels—what you please, at any moment to any distance by unseen agency.’

‘In that case,’ said the Professor, ‘I am come on a fool’s errand indeed.’

‘At Simla, only last year,’—it was the Rev. Benjamin Rudge, in his loud, coarse voice, which irritated some people beyond endurance—‘some of the so-called occult philosophers were invited to bring over a copy of that day’s “Times.” They refused to do so, on the ground that every request for a miracle could not be complied with, and that to ask such a thing showed mere curiosity. The refusal and the excuse made scoffers laugh. If a man claims to have great powers, he must prove them. Our young Prophet, if I may call him so, has claimed very great powers on behalf of his Friends. He has shown us certain things which we should have called manifestations of a very high order. If he actually does the thing of

which we have heard, he will establish himself and his Friends on the highest pinnacle which science and philosophy have yet realised. Time and space will be annihilated, and even the power of electricity will be surpassed.'

He had spent the afternoon rounding off this and a few other sentences, with a view to a letter announcing the Miracle, if it should come off. That letter was duly sent, and being signed by himself, and backed by another from that well-known, sober, and well-balanced intellect, the Rev. Amelius Horton, it met with universal incredulity, and smiles and snorts and jeers. But when the Professor himself gravely and soberly described what had taken place, so far as his senses enabled him to see and to hear, a sensation was produced as of a new revelation; and everybody asked who was Herr Paulus, and nobody knew, and all the world waited eagerly for more.

'When is he coming, Hetty?' asked Cicely.

‘Very soon, I believe. Oh! How can he do things in the presence of people who want to make him out an impostor?’

‘Tell me all—whisper everything, dear.’

‘The explanation,’ said Mr. Amelius Horton, ‘will, of course, be found in the development of will energy. The unknown force is will energy. It is to be the force of the future. It will be cultivated like strength of body, and we shall take rank in the future according to the strength of the will energy.’

‘Who is that person?’ the Professor asked Tom.

‘It is the Rev. Amelius Horton, Senior Fellow of King Henry’s, Cambridge.’

‘Oh! Is that the result of classical study or of mathematical research? Well, let us begin, and let us keep our eyes wide open. Of course it is all nonsense about Time and Space. There will, I suppose, be a good deal of talk to wrap up the real thing.’

‘Yes. The only thing I have yet found out about our man,’ said Tom, ‘is that he has a curious power of mesmerism. That

awakens suspicion, but it does not explain anything.'

'Mesmerism,' repeated the Professor. 'Yes; it is a strange power, and ought to be taken out of the hands of quacks and impostors. It is an undoubted power. Everybody who can persuade other people that he says or does things impossible, must have something of that power. But I think he will not mesmerise me. Perhaps thought-reading is only a form of mesmerism, so that the patient is forced to think what the operator compels him and forces upon him. Has he mesmerised you?'

'No; he has tried. But he can't.'

'I remember,' the Professor continued, in his quiet and reflective way, 'going to see a performance by a certain Dr. Slade about ten years ago. He did all sorts of foolish things first—quite insulting to common understanding, and then he did the famous slate trick.'

'I know. Showed it to you clean; put it on the table, presently turned it over, and showed it covered with writing.'

‘Quite so. That is exactly what I saw, and precisely as I described it. The writing itself was pure drivel. It seemed to me a most mysterious thing, only to be explained by some hypothesis about writing which should be invisible until after a certain time. And this was on the face of it absurd. But the man I had brought with me was a professional conjuror, one Hellis by name, who is now dead, and he enlightened me. Dr. Slade caught my eye and held it. He thought he had caught my companion’s as well, but there he was mistaken. And Hellis saw him actually changing the slate for another, and shoving the first one into a receptacle under the table. He did it quite coolly, being confident that he held the eyes of both. Well, the audacity of the announcement of what we are going to see this evening reminds me of Dr. Slade’s slate. It is so beautifully simple, and at the same time so impossible.’

Tom laughed. ‘We must not, however, rank Herr Paulus with Dr. Slade. He has not converted me, and I am convinced that

he is playing some game. But I cannot find him out. Meantime, we are very good friends, and he knows that I am watching him. Hush ! here they come.'

At that moment Lady Augusta entered on Herr Paulus's arm. The ancient Philosopher looked like nothing more than an extremely handsome young gentleman of the modern time. Mr. Brudenel, who followed, looked assured and easy, without any of his customary nervousness.

The guests divided right and left, and they advanced, taking up a position in the middle of the room. Mr. Brudenel's table, in the drawer of which lay that novel by Ouida, which he had not found time to finish since the Abyssinian tour had commenced, was pushed back, and a clear space was formed.

Lady Augusta greeted her guests and sat down ; some of the ladies did the same. Others, too much excited by the expectation of what was to come, preferred to stand.

Mr. Brudenel, his face glowing with triumph—after thirty years of psychical research it is indeed a triumph, one never before vouchsafed to any man, to stand on the Living rock—his eyes full of joy and his voice full of confidence, raised his left hand, and spoke :

‘My friends,’ he said, with a quiet dignity, new to him, ‘some of us have worked together in the pursuit of Spiritual truth for many years ; we have grown grey in our researches ; we have been continually baffled ; we have been deceived and disappointed ; we have been dejected ; there have been times when it was difficult to maintain a cheerful front in presence of so much disappointment and so much ridicule.’

‘We have known many such times, Brudenel,’ said Mr. Athelstan Kilburn.

‘At one of the moments of deepest humiliation, I was found by Herr Paulus ; you remember how, on the very first night, he filled our hearts with new faith, and kindled new enthusiasm within us.’

‘We remember that night very well,’ Mr. Kilburn again interrupted.

‘Perhaps it happened to some of you as to me, that in the morning a cold wave of doubt followed the hope and enthusiasm of the evening.’

‘It did,’ said Mr. Kilburn. ‘It always does.’

‘What we had seen we thought nothing but the effect of mesmeric power, with the exhibition of certain phenomena by no means new.’

‘By no means new,’ said Emanuel Chick.

‘Though brilliantly executed and in the full light for all to see. I say, my friends, that some of you felt as I did.’

There was a general and sympathetic murmur at the recollection of these unpleasant symptoms. They were perhaps a common experience among spiritualists.

‘In the morning, therefore,’ Mr. Brudenel went on, ‘I repaired to this study, oppressed and dejected. Herr Paulus followed me. He began by reading my thoughts accurately and

exactly, a thing which should of itself have reassured me. He then voluntarily proposed to give me a private proof of his credentials, and begged me to ask him something—anything apparently impossible. I asked him to place in my hands an Indian paper—the “Friend of India”—for that very day. He reminded me that the difference of time between London and Delhi is about six hours, so that at ten o’clock in the morning with us it is already four in the afternoon with them. If, he said, I had asked for a copy of the paper at midnight, I might have had one just hot from the press of the next morning. As it was—I know not how the paper came into his hands—he handed me the “Friend of India” of that very morning.’

‘This is an interesting statement,’ said the Professor.

‘I opened the paper and read it from beginning to end’—here Mr. Brudenel’s memory played him false, because in fact he had really read no more than the title and the date.

‘It had already been cut, and, I presume, had been read six hours before. In one corner was a brown stain as of spilt coffee. I then, at the request of Herr Paulus, folded the paper, placed it in an envelope, tied it round with ribbon, to which he affixed his own seal, and deposited it in a drawer of my safe. No one, remember,’ he added solemnly, ‘has a key to that safe but myself. That key never leaves my possession.’

‘And now,’ said the Professor, ‘you are going to open the drawer and to show us the paper. But, first, how are we sure that no one has got at the safe?’

‘You have my word.’

‘Precisely. But how do you yourself know it?’

‘I repeat that no one has a key except myself, and that no one knew of the deposit of this paper except myself.’

‘You are now going to show it to us. Permit me to say, Mr. Brudenel, that it would have been more satisfactory had we seen it on the day that you received it.’

‘Much more satisfactory,’ said Emanuel Chick.

‘Permit me one more question,’ this heckling Professor continued. ‘Have the copies of this paper been sent round by the Post already?’

‘I believe not,’ Mr. Brudenel replied. ‘They will be received by London subscribers to-morrow morning.’

‘That is highly important and will have to be ascertained. Now, sir, we will, if you please, proceed to the verification of the document.’

Mr. Brudenel drew forth his bunch of keys. Then he turned pale suddenly, and whispered a word in the ear of Herr Paulus.

‘The Friends have forgotten and forgiven,’ said this oracular young man. ‘Have neither doubt nor fear.’

Mr. Brudenel gave his daughter his bunch of keys.

‘Sibyl, my dear,’ he said, ‘go and open the safe. Get me the packet in the left-hand drawer.’

Sibyl obeyed. In the left-hand drawer there lay a packet of brown paper tied up with ribbon, and sealed.

‘It was sealed in my presence,’ said Mr. Brudenel, ‘by Herr Paulus. He will examine the seal before it is broken.’

The Professor looked at the seal.

‘There is a pentagon with some Hebrew letters on it,’ he said.

‘Here is the seal.’ Paul drew a ring from his finger. ‘It is my own—the seal of Prince Menelek.’

Then the Professor opened the packet. Within it was the ‘Friend of India,’ four weeks old, the paper which would be delivered in the morning.

The Professor looked at the paper suspiciously: he marked the brown coffee stain, he read the telegrams—they were dated four weeks ago—the date at the top of the page was four weeks old. Everything seemed genuine. Yet he doubted.

‘It seems to be—I suppose it is!’ he said, ‘the paper of the date named.’ He gave it

to Tom Langston, who examined it with equal care.

‘It is very odd,’ he said, glancing quickly at Herr Paulus, who received the look and the remark without apparent emotion. ‘It is extremely odd—it is, in fact, wonderful. The paper has been lying in the drawer of the safe for a month; it came oversky, so to speak, all the way; yet it smells of the ship or of the letter-bag just as Indian papers do always smell. Foreign letters have all got a double smell in fact,’—he smelt the paper curiously. ‘One of the place where they come from. There’s a Calcutta smell and a Bombay smell, and a Delhi smell for instance; of course every city has its own peculiar smell. And there’s the smell of the voyage as well. Now this paper has never been on a ship at all and yet it has this smell of the voyage. How are we to explain that?’

‘As for me,’ Paul replied cheerfully, ‘I explain nothing. I am not responsible for the paper or for the way in which it came.’

‘Why try to explain?’ asked Mr. Brudenel.

‘The fact is before us. Everyone here can testify to that. And now,’ he looked round with an air of assurance and triumph, ‘I presume that no one will doubt my statement of the case. And I hope—I trust—that this Miracle, I can account it as nothing less—will remove the last shreds of doubt if any remain as to the mission of my young friend here.’

All those who had any right to be considered persons of authority here stepped forward and shook hands, first with Mr. Brudenel and then with Herr Paulus.

It was at this point that Mr. Brudenel delivered himself of the speech which has already been mentioned. It was a purely spontaneous and unpremeditated speech, springing straight from the joy and triumph of his heart. And everybody felt that he had the right to make that speech.

Sibyl, who preserved her presence of mind and remained unmoved, looked inquiringly at Tom, who only shook his head mournfully. The case was beyond him. It seemed for the

moment as if the scoffers were silenced. Certainly, his laboratory contained no such secret as would enable him to annihilate time and space, except by means of the electric spark, which does not convey a book and parcels. The Professor, however, rallied. He was beaten down but not conquered.

‘I admit,’ he said, ‘that you have a very strong case, particularly if it could be shown that no one could receive a copy of the paper by post in time to place it in the safe. Until that is proved I cannot acknowledge the genuineness of this miracle. We must not accept the impossible as accomplished until there remains no room for doubt. Have you anything to add, sir?’ He turned to Herr Paulus.

‘I? Nothing.’ The young Philosopher was standing carelessly, as if he was not at all interested in the case. ‘Nothing at all. If you cannot accept Mr. Brudenel’s statement, it is waste of time adding mine by way of corroboration. Perhaps, as you say, the safe has been tampered with. Yet the tampering

must have been effected between the earliest possible time when the paper would be received, and nine o'clock, the time when everybody here arrived. Let us get our limits of time exact. I ought to add, however, that it is not my business to perform conjuring tricks, even of this kind. But it was thought necessary to impress upon people by some such manifestations the reality of certain messages. I am not a Medium in the ordinary sense of the word.'

'You are not,' said Emanuel Chick.

'My Friends converse with each other freely, whether they are dead or alive : whether they are together or apart.'

'Are we not mixing things?' asked the Professor.

'No—if I succeed in showing you exactly what I claim to be and to do. If you come here expecting the ordinary raps and things, you are mistaken. The arrival of this paper is not due to any spirit, but to a living person.'

'Humph!' said the Professor.

‘The original intention of that living person has been carried out. Mr. Cyrus Brudenel has no longer any doubt at all.’

‘None,’ said that gentleman ; ‘none whatever. We stand upon the Solid Rock—upon the Solid Rock.’

The repetition of this assertion unfortunately weakened its strength. It seemed as if the incredulity of the Professor had taken something from the Solidity of the Rock.

‘There are some,’ said Herr Paulus, ‘who are so prejudiced that they will never believe. Come, sir,’ he turned sharply to the Professor. ‘What is it you would like to have?’

‘Give me this day’s paper.’

‘Well, I gave it Mr. Brudenel, but you won’t believe me. Still, if you are not contented, and if my Friends are willing to gratify a sceptical mind—not that you will believe a bit the more—but still——’ He said this very slowly, and with meaning, insomuch that there was once more a hush of expectation, and all eyes were turned upon

him. 'See!' he cried, throwing forward his right arm with the same gesture that he had employed on the first evening. Then he raised his left hand and caught something folded—how it came or whence, no one saw. It was a folded paper, and he handed it to the Professor.

'What is it?' he asked.

The Professor opened the paper, looked at the title and at the date.

'Good heavens!' he cried, 'it is TO-DAY'S PAPER!!!'

'Oh!' Everybody said that.

'To-day's paper,' he repeated, again looking at the title and the date. 'The "Friend of India" published at Delhi this very day. Is it possible?'

Herr Paulus took the paper from his unresisting hand and gave it to Lady Augusta, who gave it to Hetty, who passed it on to another, and so it passed from hand to hand, for everybody wanted to see for themselves this most wonderful thing.

'Tom,' Sibyl whispered, 'I feel as if my

head was going round. What does it all mean? Can there be any reality in it?’

‘I believe,’ Tom replied, ‘that we are all mesmerised, and that he makes us see and say and testify exactly what he likes. Keep your head steady, Dodo. The Professor looks like the proverbial stuck pig. Put a pin into me if I begin to look like that.’

‘I should like,’ said the Professor, recovering a little, ‘to see the paper again. May I take it away and keep it?’

‘Certainly,’ Herr Paulus replied. ‘Where is it? Who has got the paper?’

Wonderful to relate, nobody had it. The paper had vanished. Some there were who thought that the Rev. Benjamin Rudge had taken it for literary purposes, but he declared that he had done no more than read the title and the date, like the rest. Others, again, thought that Mr. Emanuel Chick might have slipped it into his pocket in order to hide the evidence of superior skill; but he denied the charge. Everybody had seen it; everybody had passed it on: and no one

could find out who had it last. It was gone—lost—and it has never been seen since

‘Shall we offer our pockets to be searched?’ asked Herr Paulus.

‘Oh! Nonsense,’ said the Professor.

‘My dear sir,’ said Herr Paulus, ‘those who sent the paper here could take it away again. Understand, sir’—for the first time this evening he abandoned the easy half-careless manner and became grave and admonitory—‘understand that my Friends do not suffer dictation. They have chosen to show you this Wonder. Believe it or not as you please. Put any construction upon it that you please. And now there will be no further manifestations.’

‘Herr Paulus,’ the Professor replied, ‘I have no reply to make and no explanation now to suggest. But I always remember Dr. Slade’s slate,’ he added in a whisper.

‘Herr Paulus.’ It was Mrs. Hanley Tracey. ‘Remember, you promised to seek us out on Sunday evenings. Come next Sunday.’

‘ Dear Lady Augusta ’—it was Mrs. Medlock—‘ you *must* keep him here. Oh! that College of which we spoke. How gladly would I hellup! I have been asked to lecture for the new Society for the Extension of Psychical Learning. It is a most interesting and attractive subject, full of ghosts. But oh! how much rather would I hellup your College!’

‘ Old man.’ It was Tom who laid his hand on Paul’s arm, and whispered. ‘ It was wonderful—truly wonderful! It was beautifully done. How the DEVIL did you do it? And what became of the paper?’

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON







PR
4104
H4
1888
v.1

Besant, (Sir) Walter
Herr Paulus, his rise,
his greatness, and his fall

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY
